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**AN  
ACCOUNT OF ASSAM**

With some notices concerning  
**THE NEIGHBOURING TERRITORIES**

**FIRST COMPILED IN 1807—1814**

BY

**FRANCIS HAMILTON, M.D., F.R.S.**

EDITED BY

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**PUBLISHED BY THE  
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GAUHATI, ASSAM.**

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## PREFACE

The Buchanan-Hamilton Manuscripts deposited in the India Office Library, London, are invaluable for the purpose of investigation into the political, economic and social history of the districts now comprised in the provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Assam. The neglected condition in which they have been allowed to remain for a long time since the date of their compilation has been frequently commented upon by antiquarians, historians, administrators and archivists. For some years past, considerable interest has been roused in the matter of the Buchanan-Hamilton Manuscripts, resulting in the publication of several of the journals and reports.

The Buchanan-Hamilton Manuscripts are the result of a long and laborious survey of the districts of Eastern India which formed part of the East India Company's territories or were adjacent to them. This survey was undertaken in 1808 to 1814 at the instance of the Governor-General in Council. Dr. Francis Buchanan\* afterwards known as "Francis Hamilton, formerly Buchanan," was instructed to extend his enquiries "throughout the whole of the territories, subject to the immediate authority of the Presidency of Fort William." It was also desired, "that you should extend your inquiries to the adjacent countries, and to those petty states with which the British Government has no regular intercourse. In performing this duty, however, you are prohibited from quitting the Company's territories, and are directed to confine your inquiries to consulting such of the natives of those countries as you may meet with, or natives of the British territories who have visited the countries in question." The inquiries were to be directed to the following subjects:—(1) topography, history,

\*Francis Buchanan was born in 1762, and died in 1829. In 1815 he dropped the name Buchanan and assumed that of Hamilton.

antiquities of the country; (2) the condition of the inhabitants, sanitation, costumes, food, medical treatment, education; (3) religion, customs, priests; (4) the natural production of the country, animal, vegetable and mineral; (5) agriculture, vegetables, implements of husbandry, manure, measures connected with floods and inundations, domestic animals, fences, farms, landed property, tenure; (6) fine arts and common arts, architectures, sculptures, paintings, markets; (7) commerce, exports and imports, weights and measures, transport by land and water, roads.

The survey was commenced after the rainy season of 1807 and it continued upto the hot weather of 1814. Hamilton, according to the terms of his instructions, could not enter Assam which was then ruled by Ahom princes. He conducted his survey of Assam from his headquarters at Goalpara and Rungpoor where he stayed from 1807 to 1809. At these places he came across Assamese princes and nobles who had taken shelter in Bengal, and Bengalis who had paid occasional visits to Assam. His inability to come to Assam has deprived his *Account of Assam* of any mention of its architecture and sculptures which could not obviously be described by one who had to depend upon secondhand reports. The Assam account forms part of the fourth volume of the Buchanan-Hamilton Manuscripts, and it was examined by me at the India Office Library, London, in October 1936. An earlier version of the Assam report is to be found in the third volume. The second version which is incorporated in the fourth volume gives an impression of finality as far as language and the arrangements of the chapters are concerned. Fortunately for us the second version was published in the *Annals of Oriental Literature* for June 1820, pp. 193-278, during the life-time of Hamilton himself, thus probably receiving the benefit of the author's final revision in proofs. A part of the *Account of Assam* was inserted in the third volume of Montgomery Martin's *Eastern India*, published in 1838.

Besides the *Account of Assam*, there are several Assam papers among the Buchanan-Hamilton Manuscripts:—(1)



*History of Kamarupa*, which has been printed as an appendix to the *Kamrupar Buranji*, published by the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, in 1930; (2) *Vocabularies of the Assami and Kamarupa Languages*, from Ruchinath Kamarupi, 1810, a transcript of which has been prepared by us from the India Office original; (3) There is also a vocabulary of about 1800 words arranged by topics in English, Banga, Koch, Rabha, Garo, Kachari, Panikoch, Assamese and Manipuri.

Buchanan-Hamilton's *Account of Assam* represents the result of the third attempt made by the Honourable East India Company to collect information about Assam. In 1787, while appointing Captain Hugh Baillie as Superintendent of the Assam trade and Collector of Rangamati and Goalpara, the Governor-General instructed that officer to report on the resources of Assam, and the customs of the inhabitants. Some information can be gathered from Baillie's letters written from Goalpara to the Governor-General. But Baillie did not find time to compile a systematic survey of Assam as he had to close down his Goalpara factory and office early in 1790 owing to the dissensions and strifes then raging in Assam. The attempt was repeated when Captain Welsh was deputed to Assam in 1792 to expel the Bengal Burkandazes from Assam. The result is embodied in Captain Welsh's letters to Lord Cornwallis and to Sir John Shore, specially in his replies to Shore's *questionnaire* on Assam affairs.\* In addition to the mass of information contained in Welsh's letters, we have a more literary presentation of Assam in Dr. J. P. Wade's *Account of Assam and Geographical Sketch of Assam*.† The appointment of Hamilton in 1807 to report on Assam, in addition to the districts of the Bengal Presidency embodies a deliberate

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\* The replies have been printed in the Appendix to Sir Alexander Mackenzie's *History of the relations of Government with the hill tribes of the North East Frontier of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1884.

† Wade's *Account of Assam* has been edited by Srijut Benudhar Sharma, and published at North Lakhimpur in 1927. Wade's *Geographical Sketch of Assam* has been edited by Dr. S. K. Bhuyan and published as a serial in the *Assam Review*, Silchar, 1928-30.

and a serious attempt to compile an account of Assam of which there was a regrettable lack of information.

It will be seen that Dr. Wade's *Account of Assam* was based on personal observation of, and direct contact with the life and manners of the people of Assam; whereas Hamilton derived his materials mainly from Assamese fugitives in Bengal and Bengali visitors to Assam. In spite of the handicaps under which Hamilton had to work his account is an important contribution to our study of the political situation, the economic resources and of the social life of the people in the beginning of the nineteenth century immediately before the invasion of the country by the Burmese. The value of the book has been enhanced by the description of the Garos added to the *Account of Assam*. Hamilton's love of accuracy, his sense of proportion, and his previous experience at compiling topographical and scientific reports have all combined to make his *Account of Assam* a valuable contemporary document.

It will be premature to point out the merits and defects of the book as far as the incorporated information is concerned, on account of the paucity of indigenous materials relating to the period, and also for our hesitation to attribute an error to Hamilton in view of his general accuracy of description, and for the fact that he collected his materials from reliable eye-witnesses and spectators whose testimony has been accepted by historians of all ages as an important source of information.

Hamilton makes several references to a map of Assam published in London by Arrowsmith in 1814. We obtained a copy from the India Office Library; but owing to the disuse at the present time of the photo-zinco process by which the original map had been printed, the map-experts have reported their inability to reproduce the same without making the letters illegible. Hamilton's orthography has been strictly adhered to in the present text, though his spellings of names and places are very much out of use now.

In conclusion I express my indebtedness to Dr. H. N. Randle, Librarian, India Office Library, London, for lending

the copy of *Annals of Oriental Literature* for June 1820, and to Mr. W. T. Ottewill, O.B.E., Superintendent, India Office Records, London, for preparing for us copies of Arrowsmith's map of Assam through Messrs R. B. Fleming & Co., Technical Photographers, London.

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The following books are recommended for the use of those who want to know further about Dr. Francis Hamilton and the Buchanan-Hamilton Manuscripts :—

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# ACCOUNT OF ASSAM

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## PART I

### Account of Asam

#### INTRODUCTION.

The following account was collected during the years 1808 and 1809, partly from several natives of Bengal, who, on different occasions, had visited Asam, and partly from natives of that country, who were fugitives in Bengal. Some of the former had resided long in Asam, and had there connexions, whose office gave them an opportunity of being well informed. Among the latter were persons inferior to none in the kingdom in rank and education. The accounts on all points did not agree ; nor can I be certain, that I have, on all occasions, been able to select the parts that approach nearest to truth. In general, however, I shall mention the most material differences, following, as my most ordinary guide, the information which I received from a very sensible Brahman of Bengal, who being of the family of the king's spiritual guide, had passed many years in the country. He happened to be at Goyalpara during the rainy season 1808, which I passed there, was recovered by me from a very severe distemper, and during his recovery I had abundant leisure to procure whatever information he could give.



## CHAPTER I. HISTORY.

Many ages ago, two brothers, named Khunlai and Khuntai, came to a hill named Chorai Khorong, which is situated south from Gargang, (Ghurgong A.), the ancient capital of Asam. Khunlai taking with him some attendants and the god Cheng, went towards the S.E. and took possession of a country called Nora, which his descendants continue to govern. Khuntai remained in the vicinity of the hill Chorai Khorong, and kept in his possession the god Chung, who is still considered by his descendants as their tutelary deity.

The two brothers, Khunlai and Khuntai, are supposed to have come from heaven. What place that may mean I cannot say. Since the descendants of the latter have adopted the religion of the Brahmans, the original word is translated Swarga, the heaven where Indra reigns. Probably, this heaven was some part of Thibet, bordering on China, as some few traces of Chinese manners may be still observed. Khunlai remained in Nora, and his descendants still govern that country, and by the Hindus are considered as infidels and monsters of impurity; but a friendly intercourse is still maintained between the descendants of the two brothers.

Khuntai is usually reported to have been accompanied by the Deodhaing his spiritual guide, and by two Dangariyas, a Duyara, a Dehingga, a Lahan, a Sandike, and thirty-six Hatimuriyas, in all forty-three persons; although this number is disputed, and some allege that the Hatimuriyas amounted to only twenty men.

It is supposed, that, when Khuntai arrived, the country now called Asam proper, was subject to twelve petty chiefs, (Bara Bhungiya,) who, without force, submitted to a person very much their superior in dignity and education. This, however, seems rather improbable, and the people of Kachhar allege, that the country, previous to the irruption of Khuntai belonged to their prince. On the other hand it must be

observed, that the descendants of several of the petty chiefs are said still to remain in the country. These differences may be reconciled by the supposition, that these chiefs were tributaries of Kachhar, who had shaken off the authority of their prince, and fallen into a state of anarchy : for it must be observed, that the Bengalese frequently express this state by the term twelve landlords, (Bara Bhungiya,) just as the people of Karnata use the phrase (Nava Nayaka) nine captains, to express the same condition. The improbable part of this story is, that either the prince of Kachhar, or the petty chiefs, should have submitted to the authority of Khuntai with his handful of followers. This however may be explained by a consideration of the account that is given of these personages. The Danggariyas were the companions and confidants of Khuntai, the Duyara was his porter, the Dihingga his cook, the Lahan his goatherd, the Sandike his drawer of water, and Hatimuriya implies the commander of 1,000 men. It is therefore probable, that Khuntai was accompanied by an army consisting of many corps, commanded by an equal number of Hatimuriyas, while his nominal cook, porter, drawer of water, and goatherd, held the chief offices of state, just as the persons called groom (comes stabuli) and butler (dapifer) in Europe, while the feudal government remained in vigour, were in the possession of the chief commands. In Asam the descendants of these persons still retain their ancient dignities ; and, if the Hatimuriyas ever amounted to thirty-six they are now reduced to twenty families.

The original territory occupied by Khuntai, included two very long islands formed by branches of the Brahmaputra, together with some of the lands adjacent ; on both banks of that great river.

Thirteen princes, in a regular succession from father to son, continued to govern this territory with great success, according to the rules of their ancestors. They eat beef, pork, and all other foods that shock the natives of India, and drank wine. The Deodhaings were their spiritual guides, perform-



ing the worship of the god Chung with great mystery and secrecy, and possessing some books called Bulongji, written in a character which appears on the old coin, and which seems to have a strong affinity with that of Ava. These books are said to be composed in a language which was formerly spoken at the court of Asam, and are said to contain a chronicle of their kings, who were as follows :

- |                 |               |
|-----------------|---------------|
| 1. Khuntai,     | 8. Chupinong, |
| 2. Chukapha,    | 9. Chhuchong, |
| 3. Chutaupha,   | 10. Churang,  |
| 4. Chubinong,   | 11. Chujang,  |
| 5. Chuinong,    | 12. Chuphuk,  |
| 6. Tukophi,     | 13. Chukum,   |
| 7. Chhachonong, |               |

all names strongly resembling the Chinese.

During the government of these princes, three different attempts were made by the Moslems to subdue the country, and all ended in complete disgrace and overthrow. See Asiatic Researches, Vol. II. p. 171, &c. In the last, which happened in the reign of Aurungzebe, under the command of Mir Jumleh ; his army was so roughly handled by the enterprising and warlike Asamese, that he not only was compelled to make a precipitate retreat, but to yield up a large part of the lands which had belonged to the Moslems before the invasion took place, and which now forms the greater part of the western of the three governments into which Asam is divided.

In the account above referred to in the Asiatic Researches, the king of Asam is called Jeidej Sing, or Jayadhwaja Singha ; but no such name appears in the list of Asamese princes, nor indeed can it be expected that it should ; for from the account it would appear, that these princes still retained their original language and customs, and Jayadhwaja Singha are Sanskrita words, and probably a translation of the proper title.

Tradition mentions, that the prince then governing, when he attacked the Indian army, dressed a number of low persons

like Brahmans, and ordered them to drive a great herd of oxen between the armies, on which the Hindu soldiers retreated, lest any injury should happen to the sacred order and beasts. There is no doubt, that in Asam some persons, now employed in the lowest offices, wear the thread of distinction, and are called Brahmans on account of their descent from the persons who were decked out by the victorious king. There is therefore perhaps some foundation for the story, but we can scarcely suppose, that an army of Aurungzebe should have been influenced by any respect either for Brahmans or cattle; and the fellows were probably called Brahmans as a mark of scorn for the doctrine of cast, with which even the Moslems of India are infected, and which led the author, who gives the account of the expedition under Mir Jumleh, to consider the Asamese as mere brutes under a human form.

This contempt for the sacred order did not long continue. The son of Chukum introduced this innovation, took the title of Gadadhar Singha, and was the fourteenth prince of the family. The conversion of the royal family seems to have been accomplished by female intrigue. Chukum having been enamoured of a Hindu concubine, departed from the rules of the family, and settled the succession on her son Gadadhar, who, according to the law of Asam, was entirely illegitimate. On this account perhaps it was that he preferred the religion of his mother; and the Brahmans made a stretch of conscience in order to receive a sovereign among their followers, who, owing to the conquests of the family, then formed a considerable portion of the nation, and a portion ready to support the authority of a convert, however irregular his claim to succession might be. The old priesthood however continue to be Purohits (officiating priests) for the king in the worship of the family deity Chung, which is still followed. The Bengalese language also became more common, although it was not used on the coin, nor in state affairs, until the time of Rudra, son of Gadadhar. Now it is the common language even of the court; and the original Asamese, commonly spoken in the reign of Aurungzebe, in all probability will be soon lost; and

it is now a dead language, and is only studied by those who follow the old worship. I have deposited in the Company's library a vocabulary of the dialect of Bengalese now used in Asam.

The evil of departing from the regular succession soon became evident. Gadadhar had two sons, Kana, and Rudra. The two chief officers of government disliking Kana, the eldest son, put out his eyes, and placed his younger brother on the throne. Kana had two sons, one legitimate, and the other by a concubine. Whether or not any descendants of the former still remain I have not learned, but a descendant of the illegitimate offspring is now called king; although it is generally admitted, that the descendants of Rudra alone are entitled to be called Tungkhungiya, or to succeed to the government.

The oldest coin of Rudra, the son of Gadadhar, that I have seen, is dated in the year Saka 1618, corresponding with the year of our Lord 1695; and the latest is dated 1635 of Saka, or A.D. 1712.

Hitherto the Asamese had been a warlike and enterprising race, while their princes had preserved a vigour that in the East is not commonly retained for so many generations; but their subjection to the Brahmans, which was followed by that of most of the nation, soon produced the usual imbecility, and the nation has sunk into the most abject pusillanimity towards strangers, and into internal confusion and turbulence.

Rudra Singha finding that the sacred order had fallen into contempt, on account of the pretended Brahmans, who were descended from the persons whom his ancestor, in mockery of cast, had decked in the guise of Brahmans, made an investigation into the claims of all the Brahmans in the country, and degraded all those whose origin could be discovered to be spurious. The whole order, however, then in the country, having been brought into discredit by the uncertainty of their extraction, he was not contented with a Brahman of Kamrup, but adopted, as his spiritual guide,

Ramkrishna Nyayavagis, a Brahman of Bardhaman, (Burdwan R.), who, according to report, was a very holy man, and whose descendants enjoy the office. The spiritual guide (Guru) usually resides with the king, and is accompanied by twelve or fourteen of his male relations, one of whom is priest (Purohit) for the king in the worship of the Hindu gods. The families of these Brahmans reside at Nadiya, and the youth are educated at that seminary of Hindu learning. Some of these whom the commentator on the account of the expedition of Mir Jumla had seen, and who of course spoke mere Bengalese, led him to contradict the account, where it states, that the Asamese spoke a language peculiar to themselves; and an idea of Hindu perfection seems to have led him to suppose that the barbarians (Mlechchhas) of Asam were superior to the Moguls, the most polished and magnificent race that ever inhabited India.

Owing probably to the intercession of the Brahmans, who would naturally be shocked at the barbarity of the custom, Rudra Singha did not disable his younger sons from the succession, by inflicting a personal blemish, according to the custom of the family; and this seems to have been the first mark of decay in the vigour of the descendants of heaven.

Rudra left four sons, and was succeeded by Siva Singha, the eldest. The coin of this prince of the earliest date, that I possess, is in the year Saka 1644 (A.D. 1721) leaving eight years uncertain between it and the last coin of Rudra. In this reign it was contrived to throw the whole power into the hands of women. Soon after the succession of Siva, a Brahman, by his profound skill in the science called Jyotish, discovered that the reign would be very short, and that Siva, even before his death, would be deprived of the government. It was then suggested, that this prophecy might be evaded by resigning the government to a wife, in whose fidelity confidence might safely be placed; and several ladies seem to have enjoyed the royal dignity in succession, and their names appear on the coin. I found coins dated Saka 1646, 1647, 1648 (A.D. 1723, 1724, 1725) in the name of Phuleswari, the wife of Siva Singha.

She is said to have governed three years, and to have died in child-bed. I also found coins dated 1652, 1653 (A.D. 1729, 1730) in the reign of Pramatheswari, the wife of Siva Singha ; also those dated 1655, 1657, 1658 (A.D. 1732, 1734, 1735) in the reign of Ambika, the wife of Siva Singha ; finally, those dated in 1661, 1662, 1664, 1665, 1666 (A.D. 1738, 1739, 1741, 1742, 1743) in the reign of Sarweswari Devi, wife of Siva Singha. During this long period the name of the poor prince appears only on one coin that I procured in the year 1660 (A.D. 1737), and he is said to have enjoyed no sort of authority. When one queen died, he was merely placed on the throne in order to marry another, who might assume the government.

The eldest son of Siva Singha was killed in war, and left a son named Mahaneswar, who is probably still alive ; but Siva Singha was succeeded by his younger brother Pramatta, of whom I had coins from the year 1667 to 1672 (A.D. 1744 to 1749) in the former of which he succeeded his brother, or rather his brother's wife.

Pranatta had no son, and was succeeded by his brother, Rajeswar, of whom I had coins between the 1674 and the 1690 (A.D. 1751, 1767) ; but he is said to have reigned twenty years, which is not contradicted by any coin that I have seen. This prince seems to have been inclined to adopt the manners of the Moslems, as I have found several of his coins, that have Persian legends. Rajeswar had three sons.

I. Kandura, who has died, and left a son, that, from having been marked, is incapable of succession.

II. Majujana (this means middle son ; his name I do not know) who left four sons, all perhaps still alive ; but they all were marked, and are incapable of succession. Their names are

1. Baranati, 2. Kara, 3. Bhakara, 4. Charala.

III. Harujana. This means youngest son. He is dead, and has left two sons, both rendered incapable of governing.

- I. Baramuni resides at Khaspur in the Kachhar country, in the house of his mother's relations, to which he retired in order to save his children from being maimed. He has had five sons, but one died unmarried.
  1. The eldest now alive is Brajanath, who in 1809 was at Calcutta, soliciting assistance to place him on the throne. He has three sons.
  2. Baban is with his father.
  3. Sindura, who is in Bengal.
  4. Indu, who is with his father.
- II. The second son of Harujana is Tukor, who has a son, and both reside at Monipur.

Rajeswar was succeeded by Lakshmi his brother, of whom I had coins between the 1692 and the 1698 (A.D. 1769, 1775). This prince, according to the custom of his ancestors, maimed all the males of his family, so as to secure the succession to his son. The kingdom was now, however, hastening to ruin. The power of the spiritual teachers had acquired such force, that their insolence became intolerable, and Lakshmi as Lord of heaven (Swaragadeo) could no longer contain his anger; so that, to check their pride, he burned a splendid building, that contrary to law had been erected by one of them named the Mahamari, who guided a multitude of the lowest and most ignorant of the people. The inflamed multitude put the chief minister to death; but the prudence of Lakshmi enabled him, although with great difficulty, to smother the rebellion; and he died in peace.

Gaurinath, the son of Lakshmi, succeeded his father, and was the twentieth prince and seventeenth generation of the family since it came on earth. The earliest of his coins that I have seen is in 1703, and the latest in 1717 (A.D. 1780-1794). He seems to have been a weak young man, totally unable to contend with the enthusiastic multitude. The low followers of the Mahamari (mostly fishermen) drove him from his throne,

and Pitambar, the spiritual guide of these ruffians, appointed his nephew, Bharat Singha, to be king. This person, in a coin dated 1715 (A.D. 1792), claims a descent from Bhagadatta, which, had he been successful, would have been considered as an indisputable fact. But Gaurinath, having thrown himself on the protection of Lord Cornwallis, that nobleman, shortly before his departure for Europe in 1793, sent Captain Welsh, with eleven hundred Scapoys, who restored Gaurinath to the throne of his ancestors, and after a short stay returned to Bengal, very much to the regret of the prince. During the insurrection of the populace under the Mahamari, the most horrid excesses had been committed, and most of the proper Asamese and men of rank had been compelled to fly for refuge into the large island surrounded by the Brahmaputra and Kolong rivers, and the only person among them, who showed any considerable spirit of enterprise or courage, was one of the great hereditary counsellors of state, the Bura Gohaing. On Bharat Singha and his rabble having been put to flight by Captain Welsh, I do not know what became of that pretender. It is said, that at the intercession of Captain Welsh he received a pardon. He was succeeded in his usurpation by a certain Sarbananda Singha Narendrasya, who coined money in 1716 and 1717 (A.D. 1793, 1794), and who resided at Byangmara, three and a half days' journey S. E. from Ranggapur, in the southern part of the province of Sodiya.

On Captain Welsh's retiring to Bengal, the Bura Gohaing, before mentioned as a man of enterprise, seized on the whole authority of government, and in fact was the only person among the chiefs of Asam, who seems to have had vigour sufficient for the miserable circumstances, in which the country was placed. He procured soldiers from the west of India, the Asamese, as I before said, having become dastards, and with these strangers he compelled the followers of the Mahamari to take refuge either in the Company's territory, or in the eastern extremity of the kingdom. He also put to flight a notorious robber, named Merja, who in the confusion,

with about 700 Bengalese Burkandaj, the most vile of all rabbles, had been able to spread dismay among the wretched Asamese. This fellow still lurks in the lower parts of Bhotan ; but now he only ventures to act as an ordinary robber. Bharat Singha, unmindful of the clemency that was shown to him, again rebelled, and coined money in the year 1719 (A.D. 1796), but he was taken, and put to death by the active minister.

This chief, far from being contented with the power of acting as a counsellor, which was vested in him by the laws of his country, seized on the person of Gaurinath, and drove from his presence the great secretary (Bara Boruya), who was the constitutional minister of the country. In fact Gaurinath became a mere cypher, and did not long survive the restraint in which he was placed.

The Bura Gohaing either could not procure a descendant of Rudra that was free from blemish, no persons with such pretensions, wishing to trust themselves in his power ; or, what is more probable, he desired to have a king whose claims were doubtful, as more favourable to his views. He therefore appointed as king a boy named Kinaram, who took the title of Kamaleswar, and who is descended of Kana the eldest son of Gadadhar ; but his ancestor, the son of Kana, was illegitimate, so that the title of Kinaram is universally acknowledged to be defective, and the minister has not ventured to propose his coronation. Another cause of disaffection to this poor youth has now been discovered. His forefathers followed the Kolitas, called the Soluguri Mahajans, as their spiritual guides, and he refuses to receive instruction (upades) from the Brahmans of Bengal, who have long guided the royal family. The most keen advocate for the sacred order is the mother of this unfortunate prince, who probably will not be long permitted to live, as he is now approaching manhood, and as an infant king will answer better the purposes of the Bura Gohaing, who is in full possession of power, and is still in the vigour of understanding. His government, however, is not without great difficulties ; and in a conspiracy



that happened about the year 1802 or 1803, he was under the necessity of putting to death about 500 persons of some rank, among whom was a brother of his own wife. Although the execution was performed with the cruelties usual among the Asamese, and several were put to death by the application of hoes heated to redness, the minds of the people have not been quieted, and they seem ripe for insurrection.

## CHAPTER II. FORM OF GOVERNMENT AND TOPOGRAPHY.

### INTRODUCTION.

Having thus given such historical matters as have come to my knowledge, I shall proceed to mention the principal persons and affairs of the kingdom ; in doing which I shall have occasion to detail most of the information concerning its topography, that I have received. I shall everywhere refer to Mr. Arrowsmith's map of Asam contained in his map of India, as to a known document. It is composed of two materials which I furnished.

The first, and by far the most valuable, is a survey of the Brahmaputra river by Mr. Thomas Wood, of the Bengal Engineers. Mr. Arrowsmith, so far as his survey extends, prefers Mr. Wood's orthography, which is written without any fixed rule, but so as to express the sound of the name, as it seemed to be pronounced by the people of the vicinity. Where I use another orthography, I shall place these names in brackets, with an A for Arrowsmith after each, as several errors have occurred in the engraving, that cannot be attributed to Mr. Wood.

The other document with which I furnished Mr. Arrowsmith for constructing his map of Asam, is a delineation by a native of Nogang, of which he has published a copy on a reduced scale, the word Nogang, by an error in the engraving, being printed Noyange, in place of Nogango. The names engraved by Mr. Arrowsmith were written in attempting to express the Bengalese pronunciation of the characters on the original ; but in this account, for the sake of uniformity, I have judged it necessary to use entirely the orthography of Dr. Wilkins. For instance, the river which in the west and south of India is called Brahmaputra, in Bengal, is called Brohmoputro ; but it would, I suspect, lead to confusion, were

I in one place to use the one orthography, and in another place the other manner of spelling.

The map by the native of Nogang is very imperfect ; and I have much to regret, that I have lost one on a larger scale, and entering into more detail, with which I was favoured by Raja Brajanath of the royal family. I fortunately, however, have preserved some notes taken from the most intelligent attendant that had followed the Raja's fortunes, and who was sent with the map to give an explanation. In these notes I have explained the most material differences, which it must be observed, were very considerable. As in most points the native of Nogang agrees best with Mr. Wood's survey, which, as far as it extends, strongly confirms almost every point of this document, I give it the preference in almost everything relating to the territory of Asam itself ; but I think, that Raja Brajanath's map deserves most credit respecting the neighbouring states, with which his rank enabled him to be by far the best acquainted.

#### SECTION I. OF THE KING AND THE OFFICERS AT HIS RESIDENCE.

The persons descended from Rudra Singha by legitimate marriage, and entitled to continue the succession, are called Tungkhungiya ; and all these have a right to succeed to the royal dignity ; except such as have on their body some blemish or mark, whether from disease or accident, the scar either of an honorable wound, or of the small-pox, being equally a complete bar to the royal dignity. In order probably to prevent the dangers of a disputed succession, it was the maxim of the family, to mark every youth that was not intended for being the presumptive heir, so soon as he approached manhood, by a wound on some conspicuous part, such as the nose or ear. This did not prevent him from being considered as a prince ; he was called Gohaing Deo, and his children, if without blemish, had a right to succession ; although, so far as I can learn, the son of a person who was marked, has never yet succeeded. As a farther precaution, all the princes, not sons of the reigning king, and their families, were confined on a hill

called Tejinamrup, to which there are three ascents, and three strong guards, Chaudang, Dolakakuriya, and Kukurachoya. This hill is situated among forests, about two days journey S. E. from Gargang. The number of princes confined has of late decreased, many having escaped to other countries, and having there had children, which will no doubt tend to hasten the overthrow of the dynasty. Wherever the usual law of the country does not give the exclusive succession to estates and honors to one son, it becomes impossible to secure the right of royal succession undisturbed, even by the most vigorous precautions, such as the Asamese have adopted.

The kings formerly lived at Gargang; but Siva Singha removed the seat of government to Ranggapur Nagar (the city the abode of pleasure), which is situated on the Dikho river, that, about three hours' journey from the fort, falls into the Dihing or southern branch of the Brahmaputra river. Ranggapur was a large town, and was very probably the place so named, where Bhagadatta, king of Kamrup, had his country residence; although it is not improbable, that this prince may have had two Ranggapurs, one to the east, and one to the west of his capital, which was at Gohati. The royal palace was surrounded by a wall of brick, about three cubits thick, and three cubits and a half high. The house in which the throne stood (Changghar) was thatched, but was supported by beams of sal, and its walls were constructed of bamboo mats. In the same inclosure was a building of brick (Rangghar) in which the Raja sat to view public shows. There was also a small temple, composed entirely of copper. In this, as is supposed, the god Chung was kept; but the whole worship of that deity is veiled in the most profound mystery.

Since the disturbances in the reign of Gaurinath, the royal residence has been removed to Jorhat, about twenty miles west from Ranggapur. It stands on both sides of the Dichoi river (Dessoie, A.), which comes from the mountains on the southern frontier. No buildings of brick have been erected, nor is any brick house permitted to a subject. The kings and nobles live in thatched huts, with walls of bamboo

mats, supported by sal posts, and built after the fashion of Bengal, with arched ridges, and mud floors. Each apartment is a separate hut. The king has some gold and silver vessels, and some glassware and rich furniture, that has been sent as presents by the government of Bengal. Where the chief nobles sit in their own houses, a heap of earth is raised, and this is covered with mats and cloth. If any person highly respected comes to visit him, the noble orders a blanket for a seat ; but in general all his guests sit on the bare ground, as there is no furniture in the hut, where company is received. Very great persons have bedsteads and curtains ; persons of lower rank who attempted to imitate their superiors in the use of such luxuries, would be severely punished. In courts of justice the judge sits on a low wooden stool ; all other persons are seated on the bare ground, as if in the royal presence.

The coronation, or rather enthronement of the king, is performed with much ceremony. The Raja, mounted on a male elephant, and accompanied by his principal wife (Bara Kumari) riding on a female, proceeds to plant a tree (*Ficus religiosa*) on the hill Chorai Khorong, where his ancestor Khuntai first appeared on earth. By the way he takes up the young tree, and pays the proprietor whatever price he chooses to demand. In performing this ceremony, the god Chung is suspended round his neck, he is girt with the sword Hyang-dang, he carries in his turban the feathers of the sacred bird Deokukura (*Pavo bicalcaratus*), and he is accompanied by all the principal officers of the kingdom, by a great part of the army, and by a vast multitude of the people.

Having planted the tree, the Raja and his followers descend to three huts, that have been erected for the purpose, and which are called Patghar, Holongghar, and Singgorighar. The Raja and his queen first enter the Patghar, where some water is poured on them from a shell called Dakshinavarta Sangkha, the mouth of which is turned the way contrary to that of the shell, which is usually sounded by the Hindus, in order to attract a little notice from the gods.

The two royal persons then enter the Holongghar, and sit on a stage made of bamboos, under which is placed one of each species of animal that can be procured, such as a man, an elephant, a horse, a cow, a deer, a hog, a fowl, a duck, a snake, an insect, a fish, &c. Then water from nine Tirthas, or holy places, is poured over the king and queen, and falls on the animals.

The water of each holy place is kept in a golden vessel, and the plants called Sarwaushodhi, and Mahaushodhi have been infused into it.

The royal persons having been bathed, the king replaces the feathers in his turban, and advances with his queen to the Singgorighar, having in his hand the sword Hyangdang ; and with this, before he enters, he kills a buffalo. The original custom was to kill a man, a criminal having been selected for the purpose ; but since the time of Rudra Singha a buffalo has been substituted. The Raja then enters the Singgorighar, and ascends a throne (Singhasan) of gold, consisting of seven stages. Having been seated, the queen and the three chief persons of the kingdom make many presents of gold and jewels, and then lay their hands on the four feet of the throne. These nobles then walk seven times round their sovereign, who orders money to be coined, and gives some presents to the Deodhaing, and to the Brahman who is his spiritual guide. He also orders gratuities (siropa) to be given to all the principal officers, and to religious mendicants ; and some days provisions are distributed to the multitude, who have assembled to see the show. The Raja and his queen then dine with all the Asamese of high rank. Then all the tributary rajas, landlords, and inferior officers are introduced, and make presents, which occupies a whole month. In all these ceremonies the Chiring Phukon presides, and regulates everything according to the ancient customs of the kingdom.

There are three great counsellors of state, called Gohaing, who have by law no authority to issue orders, but whose duty it is to advise the king when he chooses to require

their assistance. Each receives a certain number of men to work for him, and no officer of government is allowed to possess any jurisdiction over these ; so that their whole management and superintendence is left with their immediate master, except when the king personally requires their assistance, which he sometimes, but rarely, does. These dignified offices are in the hereditary possession of three great families ; but the king may appoint any member of these families that he pleases to hold the office, and he may change them at pleasure. The persons holding the office always live at court. The title Gohaing seems to be the highest in the country, and, as I have said, is that given to the princes of the blood royal, who annex to it Deo or Lord. The latter is a Hindu word, but Gohaing is probably an Asamese term.

The Barapatra Gohaing is the highest in rank, and is descended from an illegitimate son of one of the kings. He is allowed 6,000 men (Payiks) in constant attendance.

The Bara Gohaing is the second in rank, and is allowed 4,000 men. He is descended from one of the Danggoriyas who accompanied Khuntai.

The Bura Gohaing is descended from the other Danggoriya, and has legally the same allowance ; but the present occupant is, in fact, the actual sovereign of the country.

The Bara Boruya, or great secretary, is the fourth great officer of state, and in fact he ought to be the prime minister, to whom, of right, the whole executive power, civil and military is entrusted, and to whose court there is an appeal in all cases, except where the servants of the three great Gohaings are concerned. He must be chosen by the king from among the four families called Duyara, Dihingga, Lahon, and Sondike. He is only allowed 100 servants, but he has fees on all commissions, and on all causes that come before his court. The present Boruya has been totally deprived of power, and his deputies act under the orders of the Bura Gohaing.

The inferior officers of state at the capital are as follows ; there are six persons called Choruya Phukons ; and in general

it may be observed, that Phukon is the title next in dignity to that of Gohaing. Each of these six has a separate title, and the whole form the council of the Bara Boruya, although they have also other duties.

1. Naoyaichhe, who is allowed 1,000 servants, with whom he mans the royal boats.

2. Dohikya )

3. Bhitrail ) Each of these is allowed twenty servants,

4. Naiya ) and their duty seems to be that of purveyors to procure whatever the king wants.

5. Deka )

6. Naisoti

The Parbatya Phukon is a Brahman, manages the affairs of one of the queens, and is allowed a Secretary or Boruya.

The Raydenggya Phukon is an Asamesc, and manages the affairs of another queen. He also is allowed a secretary.

The Raja's mother has two officers, the Khonggiya Phukon, and the Khonggiya Boruya ; both are Brahmans, and the former is allowed a secretary.

The Jolbhari Phukon is a Brahman, and has the charge of all the servants that the Raja employs in the Hindu temples. These amount to a thousand.

The Tambuli Phukon is also a Brahman, and has the care of the Raja's garden, in which betel-leaf is the chief article of cultivation.

The Naosalya Phukon is allowed a thousand men for building the royal boats.

The Chholadhora Phukon has the charge of all the Raja's effects.

The Chiring Phukon is the master of ceremonies, and has charge of the Deo Dhaings, or priests of the old religion.

The Deulya Phukon is a Brahman, who has the charge of repairing and preserving the Hindu temples.



The Kharghariya Phukon has the charge of making gun-powder.

The Nek Phukon            )  
The Dihingga Phukon    ) These have the charge of the  
king's messengers.

All these Phukons, except such as I have mentioned as being Brahmans, must be Asamese, legitimately descended from some of the persons who accompanied Khuntai, and who are called Hatimuriyas.

Boruya seems to be the title next in dignity to Phukon. Of these there are many.

The Bhandari Boruya is the king's private treasurer, and is allowed an assistant called Kayastha Bhandari.

The Duliya Boruya has the charge of the Raja's palanquins and bearers.

The Chaudanggiya Boruya has the superintendency of public executions.

The Dolakakuriya Boruya is the chief of the footmen.

The Khanikar Boruya is the superintendent of artificers.

The Sonadhar Doloyi is mint-master and chief jeweller.

The Majumdar Boruya is private secretary and letter-writer to the king, and is allowed four Changkoyatis or assistants.

The Bej Boruya is the king's physician.

The Changmai Boruya has the superintendency of the royal table.

Hati Boruya, the master of the elephants, has about one hundred and twenty five of these animals.

The Ghora Boruya, or master of horse, has only fifty horses.

The Helui Dhari Boruya has charge of the arms or arsenal.

The Devighor Boruya has charge of a private chapel.

The king has twelve Rajkhaoyas, who are under the orders of the Bara Boruya, and are officers of considerable importance each being supposed to command 3,000 men. They attend the court of justice, and are employed as umpires to settle disputes, and to superintend any public work for the king.

There are also attendant on this prince some persons called Vairagis and Kotokis. The former sent on messages to a distance ; the latter seem to be a kind of interpreters. The kings seldom choose to communicate the most important orders in writing, and the dismissal of a Gohaing, or of a governor of Kamrup, is merely signified to him by a verbal message, but it is communicated by three officers, a Kotoki, a Bora, and a Takla, all persons of low rank.

At Jorhat are 300 soldiers from the west of India, and 800 native troops, who are levied indiscriminately from all casts. The whole officers are from the west of India ; but have married in Asam, and have had lands allotted for their support. The whole are under the command of a captain Gohaing. Each company of 100 men is commanded by one Subadar, one Jumadar, six Havildars, and one adjutant.

When I have said that the king grants a certain number of men to such or such an officer, the following must be understood to be the meaning. By far the greater part of the land in Asam is granted to persons called Payiks, each of whom is held bound to work four months in the year without wages or food, either for the king, or for whatever person the royal pleasure directs. These people either work for their lord in whatever art they are skilled, or pay him a composition, which is regulated by custom ; but is very rarely accepted. As each man works only four months in the year, so, to complete the constant attendance of one man, three persons are required, and are therefore called a full Payik. It is said, before the country was depopulated by the late disturbances, that the men were only required to work on the royal account for

three months in the year, and, of course, that then four men were called a complete Payik. The men for every complete Payik are allowed twelve Purus of land free of rent. The Puru being 150 cubits square, the land allotted for paying the constant attendance of one man is very near fourteen acres, which the men who are not on service and their families cultivate. I am told that on one considerable estate, at least, the number of persons, young and old, for each Payik, amounts to from twelve to fourteen.

The Payiks are placed under four ranks of officers, who, according to their respective authority are supposed to command 1000, 100, 20, and 10 men ; but these numbers, and the numbers said to be granted to such or such officers, I am informed are merely nominal, especially since the disturbances; so that the Hatimuriya, or commander of 1000, has sometimes in fact not more than 500. All these officers are allowed lands free of rent, which are cultivated by that proportion of the Payiks that is allowed to work on their account, and each receives presents from the men and officers that are subordinate to his authority. The whole of the Payiks, I believe, may, under these officers, be compelled to take the field ; but this is seldom exacted, for they have become a mere rabble without courage, discipline, or arms.

There are two manners in which the king derives an advantage from these Payiks.

He grants a part of them to his officers for their maintenance, and for the support of their dignity, so that there is no issue from the treasury for the pay of any officer, nor indeed to any person except the foreign soldiers, merchants, and mendicants. The officer either accepts of the composition, or employes his Payiks to cultivate the farms (khat) which supply his family with provisions, to build his houses, to make and man his boats, and to make his furniture and clothing ; so that his outlay of money is very trifling. He also receives presents from all those under his authority, and is vested with the charge of the police, the punishment of slight offences, and

the settling of petty suits, in all the lands (Gangs) which his servants occupy. Each of these branches of authority is lucrative, although a considerable proportion, where the number of servants is great, goes to subordinates.

The king, however, employs a vast number of men to work in his farms, gardens, fisheries, mines, arsenals, and manufactories, and to man and construct his vessels, who all labour without any expense to the treasury. The officers whom he employs to superintend these works usually receive a commission of five per cent ; that is, are allowed to employ on their own business every twentieth man, and they are besides allowed the whole of the profits from presents, from the care of the police, and from the administration of justice, in the lands occupied by their subordinates.

These are the officers and persons employed near the king ; only it must be observed, that each principal officer has a Doyala, or deputy.

## SECTION II. OF THE OFFICERS EMPLOYED IN THE GOVERNMENT AND PROTECTION OF PROVINCES.

The central of the three chief provinces into which the kingdom is divided, and which constitutes Asam proper, ought by the constitution to be under the immediate government of the Bara Boruya, or chief secretary ; but its affairs are now managed by his deputy, under the control of the Bura Gohaing.

This province is of great extent ; but Mr. Wood having reached little beyond the capital, we have no accurate grounds for ascertaining its length, although we may make an approximation.

According to the map published by Mr. Arrowsmith and the person who composed it, on the north side of the river from Tiklipotar mukh, where the Brahmaputra divides into two branches, the Luhit, or Brahmaputra and the Dihing, this province, and its dependent jurisdictions, extend to the mouth of the Donhiri, about 103 miles above Goyalpara. Now

from Tiklipotar mukh to Goyalpara is reckoned  $18\frac{1}{4}$  days journey by land, of which  $12\frac{3}{4}$  are between Goyalpara and the mouth of the Dichoi river, which, according to Mr. Wood is placed in lat.  $26^{\circ}48'N.$  and in long.  $94^{\circ}6'E.$  from Greenwich, and is therefore about 220 miles in a straight line from Goyalpara, giving about  $17\frac{1}{4}$  miles direct for each day's journey; so that Tiklipotar mukh should be about 314 miles in a direct line from Goyalpara. Then deducting 103 from Goyalpara to the Donsiri, we have 211 miles for the length of the territory called Charidwar, which, according to the above mentioned authority, comprehends all on the north bank of the Brahmaputra, that now, in any manner, belongs to Asam proper. The width of this territory is stated to be from one to one and a half day's journey, for which we should allow from twenty to thirty miles. Two officers, subordinate to the Bara Boruya, administer justice in it, and collect the royal revenue, which, however, is only a fourth part of what the inhabitants pay. The manner in which the other three shares are collected, as will be afterwards explained, renders it highly improbable that the country should be well occupied. There is however reason, as will be afterwards mentioned, to suspect that this province does not extend so far to the west as Tiklipotar.

On the south side of the Brahmaputra the length of Asam proper is less considerable. It commences near the middle Kamakhya, about 130 miles from Goyalpara, and reaches near to the upper Kamakhya, or Kamakshia, which is said to be about ten miles below Tiklipotar mukh. Its length, therefore, should be about 174 miles. Its width is said to be from one and a half to two and a half day's journey, or from twenty-five to forty miles. But, besides this, it possesses about the upper half of the island, formed by the Brahmaputra and Kolong rivers, and it comprehends, according to the map published by Mr. Arrowsmith, the whole of the very large island which is contained between the Brahmaputra or Luhit, and the Dihing rivers; although, according to other accounts, the upper end of this island belongs to another district, as

will be afterwards explained. This island is said to be  $7\frac{3}{4}$  day's journey by land in length, and from one half to three-fourths of a day's journey in width ; the former we may call 130 miles in a direct line, and the width may be from ten to fifteen miles. This fine island is called Majuli, and has been in a great measure alienated to temples, and to men considered holy.

Asam proper is higher and of a better soil than Kamrup, and contains few or no hills and woods. It is reckoned that formerly three-fourths of the whole were in full cultivation, and that even now not above  $\frac{5}{16}$  are waste or unoccupied. This, I presume, is only meant to apply to the islands and the parts that are on the south side of the Brahmaputra. It is said, that of all the lands in Asam proper which are occupied,  $2\frac{1}{2}/16$  belong to temples or men esteemed holy,  $4\frac{1}{2}/16$  are let for rent, and  $\frac{9}{16}$  are distributed among Payiks, or reserved for the king and his officers.

There are few or no subdivisions in Asam proper, except into Gangs or manors. Each of the abovementioned officers receives a certain number of Gangs, to enable him to accommodate the people (Payiks) which are placed under his authority. The only hereditary estates are as follows.

1. Charingga.
2. Tipamiya, printed Tiponiya, by an error in Mr. Arrow-smith's map.
3. Namrup.

These three small territories have always been held by some collateral branch of the royal family, and most commonly by the descendants of Kana. They are all in the immediate vicinity of the hill Tejinamrup, where the princes not destined for the succession should be confined.

4. A very considerable estate called Doyang, which reaches to the S. W. within ten or twelve miles of Jorhat the capital, and belongs to the family of the present governor of Kamrup, (Bara Phukon,) who sends a fixed number of men

to work for the king, and disposes of the remainder as he pleases.

5. Bacha, east from Doyang, is a small estate on a similar footing, which belongs to one of the Rajkhaoyas, or commanders of three thousand men.

6. Chutiya Kumar is a similar estate, held by a family of Kolitas. It is on the north side of the Brahmaputra; and in Mr. Wood's survey is named Sootea Kooar, misprinted Koont.

The whole kingdom of Asam, or Aham, as the natives pronounce it, formed a portion of Kamrup, one of the ancient divisions of Indian geography; and at the commencement of this degenerate iron age Kamrup was subject to Bhagadatta, a person celebrated in the fables concerning the great war. Dikorbasini, a temple which was at the eastern boundary of Kamrup, is at the extremity of Asam in the same direction. In modern Asam, however the term Kamrup is confined to the western and most important province of the kingdom, the greater part of which was wrested from the Moslems early in the reign of Aurungzebe. The chief officer has only the title of Phukon; but his rank is considered as next to that of the Bara Boruya, and he must be selected from the same four families that are entitled to hold that office. The reason of his being called only Phukon, while officers of inferior dignity are called Gohaings, would appear to be, that, until the conquest of Gohati, this officer seems only to have governed the western end of the island included between the Brahmaputra and Kolong rivers, and even this jurisdiction would seem to have been curtailed by the power of the great military officers stationed in that quarter. He now has not only the management of all the affairs of his extensive province, but is usually entrusted with transacting all the intercourse with the government of Bengal; but he is not permitted to do any thing of importance without the advice and consent of his council, which consists of six Phukons, who assemble in the Dupduyar, or council-house, in Gohati (Gwahatti A.) where the Governor resides.

The city of Gohati is a very poor place, but it was formerly the residence of Bhagadatta, the king of all Kamrup, and according to Mr. Wood, is placed in 26°9'N. and about seventy miles east from Goyalpara (Goalpara A).

The greatest portion of the lands of the Asamese province of Kamrup has been granted to Payiks for service, and the management of these has been given to the different officers, either for their support, or to enable them to perform certain works for the king.

A considerable proportion of the land, however, has been granted to different Rajas, whose dignities are hereditary in certain families; but the king may appoint any person of the family to be Raja, may change the person at pleasure, and appoint another individual of the family in his stead.

Other lands pay a rent in money, and their administration is committed to zemindars, as under the Mogul princes.

Other lands have been appropriated to pious purposes, and have been granted to various temples, and to Brahmans, or other religious men.

Finally, other lands, which chiefly occupy both banks of the river near Gohati, are reserved to be cultivated on account of the king

The officers of Kamrup, besides the governor, are as follows.

Six Phukons, who constitute the provincial council.

1. The Pani Phukon superintends 6,000 Payiks, who are constantly employed in cultivating land, in fishing, and in various manufactures on the king's account. Under him is employed an accountant called Takla-Bora-Majumdar. He resides on the north bank of the Brahmaputra.

2. The Deka Phukon superintends 4,000 Payiks, employed in the same manner, but is held to be guided by the instruc-



tions of the Pani Phukon. He resides about two or three miles higher up than his superior.

3 and 4. The Dihingga and Nek Phukons are the immediate assistants of the Bara Phukon.

5 and 6. The two Chheutya Phukons are subordinate to the former.

Twelve Rajkhaoyas are always in attendance at the court of justice, (Bara Choruya,) ready to be employed as umpires to settle disputes.

The Bujur Boruya is the collector of revenue for the whole land of Kamrup, that has not been granted to Rajas, or for service, or for pious purposes. He is under the orders and inspection of the governor of the province; but cannot be dismissed from his office without an order from the king.

The Bara Kayet, or Kaiastha, is the collector's accountant.

Baldi Singha, a native of the west of India, is commander (Subadar) of the regular troops, and instructs them in European tactics. The governor has six companies, and the Pani Phukon has two. Each company contains from sixty to one hundred men of different countries and casts. About one hundred are from the west of India, and are paid entirely in money. The natives receive two rupees a month for subsistence, and land sufficient to support their families.

The Rajas of Kamrup seem to remain nearly on the same footing as during the Mogul government. They are the original petty chiefs of the country, each of whom possesses a certain territory, which is assessed to furnish a certain number of Payiks. The Raja either sends the men to work on the king's account, or remits the commutation money. No other persons who hold lands for service reside on the estates of the Rajas, who may cultivate what is not necessary for the support of the Payiks in whatever manner they please. The Rajas possess every sort of jurisdiction, except the power of very severe, or of capital punishment; and in case of war

should take the field at the head of their Payiks. The Rajas are as follows.

1. Baraduyar. The Raja is a Garo, and lives at Bhogpur, two days journey S. W. from Gohati. It is close to the mountains inhabited by independent Garos ; but these consider the Baraduyar Raja as their chief. It is for his low lands only that he pays tribute to Asam. In his territory is a market-place named Kukuriya, to which the independent Garos bring salt that they purchase at Rajhat in Jaintiya, and at Laur (Laour R.) in the district of Srihatta (Sylhet R.). The road from Laur, as I was informed by a Brahman, who had come by it, passes through the territory of a Garo chief named Koiram, who borders on Susangga (Susung R.). West from Koiram is the territory of Ganeswar Raja, (Gonaser R.), a nephew of the Raja of Koroyivari (Currybary R.).

2. Bholagram is situated east from Baraduyar. The Raja is a Mech.

3. Mairapur is situated between Bholagram and Baraduyar.

4. Lukiduyar. This territory lies west from Gohati on the Kailasi (Koilasee A.) river, and is larger than that of any of the former Rajas. It borders on the independent Garos, and no where extends to the Brahmaputra. When Mr. Wood accompanied Captain Welsh, and made his valuable survey of that country, this Raja seems to have usurped Chamoriya (Samooreah A.) Pergunah. He is of a Garo family ; but has been converted by the Brahmans, and in imitation of his sovereign receives spiritual instruction from the sacred order. He resides at Luki on the side of the Kailasi.

5. Pantan.

6. Bon-gram. These two chiefs are of the same family with the Raja of Lukiduyar, and their territories, which are very petty, are adjacent to his on the west, towards the frontier of Bengal.

7. Vagaduyar is a small territory south from Pantan. Its chief also is a Garo ; but he adheres to the customs of his ancestors.

8. Beltolya is of the same family with the Raja of Dorong : that is, he is a Koch, claims a descent from the god Siva, and is in fact descended of Raja Sukladhwaj, who was sovereign of the country. On this account he is much respected. He lives at Beltoli. (Belletollah Wood), a few miles east and south from Gohati ; but when the country was in confusion, and Mr. Wood made the survey, he would appear to have retired into a strong hold at some little distance farther from the Mahamaris.

9. Dumuriya (Demooroo Wood) lives beyond Beltoli, towards the Garo mountains. In fact he is a Garo chief, and the present occupant is supposed to know many powerful incantations, by which he can kill his enemies, or at least render them foolish. On this account he is very much respected, and the governor of the province carefully avoids giving him any manner of offence. I am assured, that neither of these two Rajas possesses any territory adjacent to the Brahmaputra ; but it would appear, that when Mr. Wood made his survey, each possessed a small portion of its bank. This was probably an usurpation, owing to the confusion of the times.

10. The Raniduyar Raja, in the confusion of the Mahamaris insurrection, seems to have seized on the country immediately west of Gohati : but in fact his real country is south from that town, at the foot of the Garo mountains, and his residence is among the hills. It is probably at Noghurreah of Mr. Arrowsmith's map. The Pamohee of Mr. Wood is said to be a market, where the Garos come to deal with this chief. He is a Garo by birth ; but has adopted the worship of Vishnu. An intelligent person, who had been in his service, informed me, that the Raja is bound to furnish constantly to the king 621 Payiks or labourers, and makes presents annually to the value of about 5000 rupees. He ought also, with his

countrymen the Garos, to assist in the king's wars. The Raja allows each Payik two ploughs of land, and on these there may be from twelve to fourteen people, young and old. One of these is always on service, and no commutation is received. There are only about 2000 ploughs in the whole country, so that the Raja lets 758 to enable him to discharge the 5000 rupees which he makes in presents. His only profit, therefore, is what he receives in presents and in the management of the police. His principal wealth is derived from his connection with the Nuniya Garos, that frequent his market. They pay him no duties; but on a certain day every year he invites all the chiefs and free men of that nation. From 5000 to 6000 usually attend, and are feasted. Every one brings a present in cotton or other commodity, which sells for about four rupees; so that, after defraying the expense of a feast, the Raja has a profit of about 15000 rupees. The whole of these Garos are willing to assist in war; but when in the field the Rajah must give them subsistence. The Garos being more warlike than the present Asamese, the Mahamaris gave the Rani Raja no sort of molestation. After the overthrow of the insurgents, the governor came with six companies to demand some extraordinary exaction; but he was opposed by 2000 farmers and 3000 Garos, and an amicable adjustment took place, by which every thing was placed on the former footing.

11. These are all on the south side of the Brahmaputra. On the north side the only Raja is Dorong, who is by far the most considerable, and most respected. In Asam he is called a Koch, the title of Rajbongsi not being acknowledged. He supplies the king with 6000 men, and no commutation is accepted. The family has divided into two branches, the representative of each of which has 3000 Payiks for his own use, so that the country, besides free land, is estimated at 12,000 farms of a little less than 14 acres each.

The best informed persons, whom I consulted, knew nothing specific concerning the Rajas of Myungh, Koleetah, Bogrutteah, Ogooreah, or Goorookeah, whom Mr. Wood

found on the island which lies between the Brahmaputra and Kolong river. The two first are said to be very petty chiefs, who live south from Gohati, and possess a village each. It is probable that the others are persons of a similar description, who in the confusion of the times had assumed some degree of consequence, and usurped a power to which they were not entitled, and which was instantly dissolved by the vigour of the Bura Gohaing.

The pergunahs of Kamrup, that had been reduced to the common system of Mogul finance, remain in the same state under the government of Asam. Each pergunah is let for from one to five years to a Chaudhuri, who agrees to pay a certain rent, one half in money and one half in goods, and whose office is in no sort hereditary. He lets all the lands, that are not given to Payiks for service, and that have not been granted for pious purposes. His profit ought to arise from the difference between the rent which he collects, and the revenue that he pays to the collector; but he receives presents, not only from the tenants, but from the Payiks that live in the Pergunah. He also acts as an officer of Police; and it is usually alleged, that the Chaudhuris take money to allow rouses to escape. They have no legal authority to inflict any kind of punishment, nor to employ any armed men. Over every four or five manors (Gangs) the Chaudhuri appoints a Talukdar, who is paid in land. In each manor he also appoints a chief (Thakuri) to collect the rent, and the Thakuri is assisted by a messenger named Tarui. Both are paid in land. It is supposed, that the Chaudhuris, who are on the same footing with what the zemindars of Bengal were before the new regulations, do not give government more than two-fifths of what they collect. The revenue of the assessed lands in Kamrup, which reaches the royal treasury, amounts to 32,000 rupees a year.

The Pergunahs on the north side of the Brahmaputra, beginning at the Company's frontier and going east, are as follows:—1. Bausi. 2. Baranagar. 3. Barabhag. 4. Bojani. 5. Bara Khyotri. 6. Chhota Khyotri. 7. Kongorbhag. 8.

Purbapar. 9. Poschimpar. 10. Bongsor. 11. Mohul. 12. Kakhari Mohul. 13. Pati-Dorong.

The Pergunahs on the south side of the Brahmaputra, beginning at Gohati and extending to the west, are,

1. Chhoyani. 2. Baronti. 3. Chamuriya. 4. Nagarbera, (Noghurbera A.).

The governor has granted to one of his Rajkhaoyas a considerable territory called Ghiladhari, which, according to the native of Nogang, occupies a space between Dorong and the eastern boundary of this province. I suspect, however, that in this he is mistaken; for the Raja Brajanath makes Chutiya Kumar, of the central province, immediately adjacent to Dorong, from which it is separated by the Donsiri (Donheeriah A.) river, and in Mr. Wood's survey, 50 minutes of longitude east from the mouth of that river, I observe another called the Gheeladarra, which is no doubt the same name with Ghiladhari. I suppose, therefore, that the Bara Phukon, having been ordered to send troops for the protection of the country called Charidwar, has had lands assigned for their support, in the territory of the central province, and has been allowed to extend his jurisdiction to these lands, which, I presume, are near the Brahmaputra.

The province under the Bara Phukon, with its several subordinate or intermixed petty jurisdictions, extends from the Company's boundary to somewhere near the celebrated temple of the middle Kamakhya or Kamakshiya (Cameka A.) which Mr. Wood places in latitude  $26^{\circ}36'N$ . and in longitude  $92^{\circ}56'E$ . from Greenwich. The province is therefore about 130 British miles in length. From the boundary opposite to Goyalpara to Nogorbera, a distance of about 21 miles, the Asamese possess only the northern bank of the river, so that on the south side the length of this province is about 109 British miles. Its width on this side is reckoned by my informants from three-fourths to one half-day's journey, or perhaps from 12 to 25 miles. On the north side of the river, the

province extends to the Donhiri or Donsiri (Donheeriah A.) river, the mouth of which, according to Mr. Wood, is situated about 103 miles above Goyalpara. The width from the Brahmaputra to the northern frontier is said to be, on an average, about one and a half day's journey, or about 25 miles. About 104 miles above Gohati, according to Mr. Wood's survey, the Brahmaputra divides into two branches; of which the northern is by far the greatest, and preserves the name, while the southern is named Kolong. These two branches separate at Arikatarmukh, and rejoin at Kajolimukh 90 miles below, leaving between them an island, which by my informants is reckoned five days' journey in length, and about one in width. About one-half of this island may belong to the western province of the kingdom, or to jurisdictions that are surrounded by it.

I have already given an account of the sub-divisions of this territory, which, so far as I can judge, is exceedingly like Haworaghat and Khungtaghat, belonging to the Company. It contains many low hills covered with woods; but a great extent of fine low land, all capable of cultivation, and at one time probably all cultivated. I am inclined, however, to suppose, that its extent does not exceed 4000 square miles and probably is rather nearer 3000. The part on the north side of the Brahmaputra, that is farmed to zemindars who have no hereditary claim, is in a still worse state than the adjacent territory of the Company; for during the insurrection of the Mahamaris, it was most cruelly plundered by the robber Merja, who has been already mentioned. The parts under the Rajas, or immediately under the officers of government, are said to be in a much better state.

In the Pergunahs the tenantry have now given up a fixed residence, and many have altogether retired to the Company's territory, while others keep their women and children there, and every morning cross the river to cultivate their fields in Asam; but return at night to sleep in some degree of safety. They cultivate the land two years, and then allow it a fallow of four, so that the whole cultivation is trifling. Their rent

is apparently very moderate: they pay on account of the king two rupees a year for each plough, and half a rupee a hoe, and five baskets of rice to the custom-master (Boruya) for a mere permission to export their mustard-seed to Bengal. They not only make other presents to the Chaudhuri; but, in order to make them give presents, are beaten and abused by every petty fellow, who is a little elevated above the lowest rank. The rent on each plough, including presents, amounts to from six to seven rupees a year, and this, were it not for the manner in which it is exacted, and the total uncertainty in which every man is concerning the extent of these exactions, would not be at all oppressive; for I learn, on the same authority on which I state the above, and which appears to me good, that a plough produces annually 30 vis of rough rice equal to rather more than 79 man's Calcutta weight (each 82 lbs.), and 6 vis of mustard-seed, which, even as burthened by the fetters of monopoly, sells at eight rupees; but, if allowed to go freely to Goyalpara, would sell for at least fifteen.

Before the insurrection of the Mahamaris, it is said, that  $\frac{6}{16}$  of the whole were waste, being occupied by rivers, marshes, woods, and hills; and that  $\frac{10}{16}$  were fully cultivated. The usual estimate is, that this furnished 80,000 Payiks to the king, or to the persons who served the prince, and that these cultivated only one-half of the province;  $\frac{1}{4}$  was granted to zemindars,  $\frac{3}{16}$  were granted for the support of temples, and  $\frac{1}{16}$  had been granted to men considered eminent for holiness. 80,000 Payiks, at the usual allowance, would require for their support about 1743 square miles of arable land, besides what was reserved for their officers and for the king, equal perhaps to  $\frac{1}{4}$  part of the above; for, although the men work one-third of their time for their officers and the king, many are not employed in agriculture. This would make one-half of the arable lands 2176 square miles, or the whole in round numbers 4000, which being only  $\frac{5}{8}$  of the whole, the total extent would be 6400 square miles. There is no doubt that the estimate of the extent, as given by



the natives, would fully justify this supposition; but there is great reason to suspect, that they exaggerate the width. In the few places where Mr. Wood had an opportunity of ascertaining this, as at Gohati, in the middle of the province, the width that he found cannot justify me in supposing the utmost extent to be more than 4000 square miles. If this be accurate, the number of Payiks must always have been nominal; at present, in the reduced state of the country, it is so most notoriously; and the officer who is said to have charge of 1000 Payiks, has often not more than 500.

Next to Kamrup the government of Sodiya is the most important charge in the kingdom, and its governor is called Sodiya Khaoya Gohaing. This country, according to the Bengalese Brahman and Raja Brajanath, extends along both sides of the Brahmaputra, from the boundary of Asam proper to the extremity of the kingdom. The governor may be appointed from any descendent of the persons who accompanied Khuntai. He resides at Sodiya near Kundilnagar, where the god Khrishna is said to have fought with a certain Rukkma raja. Sodiya is reckoned six days journey east from Jorhat. I have learned very little concerning this province, or concerning the manner in which it is governed.

The two persons from whom I received the most copious information had never been in Sodiya: and the accounts which they gave differ exceedingly. The native of Nogang who constructed the map, represents it as a very small territory, about half a day's journey from east to west, and one day's journey from north to south, and immediately west from the Dikrong river, which separates the Abor from Asam, and which is the eastern boundary of Kamrup. The Brahman of Bengal stated the province of Sodiya to be  $\frac{3}{16}$  of the whole kingdom, while the middle province comprehended  $\frac{7}{16}$  and the western province amounted to  $\frac{6}{16}$ . He farther added, that the province of Sodiya extended to the north of the Brahmaputra and to Brahmakunda, that is, to where the great river is precipitated from the northern mountains; and he reckoned the greater part of its population to be composed

of the Miris, Dophlas and Kampos, whom the native of Nongang considers as independent nations. Two circumstances give great weight to the opinion of the Bengalese. It is evident, in the first place, from the account given of the expedition of Mir Jumleh, in the Asiatic Researches, that then the northern mountains, or the country of the Miris, Kampos and Dophlas, belonged to Asam. In the second place, Raja Brajanath also extends Sodiya to the north of the Brahmaputra, placing the Michimis on its right bank, and the Kamti on its left, beyond the boundary of Asam. I shall endeavour to reconcile the difference, by supposing that the native of Nongang gives his account from the actual state of the country, and that the Bengalese spoke of Sodiya in its ancient state, before the Miris, Dophlas and Kampa Bhoteas had declared themselves independent; and when probably a great part of what the native of Nongang reckons Charidwar was under the authority of the Sodiya governor.

The following governments seem to have been established as military stations to protect the frontier.

The Morongkhaoya Gohaing governs a small district, south from Jorhat, near the hills. This person must be of the same family with the Bura Gohaing. He has 1000 Payiks or soldiers, and seems to be stationed in order to protect the frontier towards Monipur.

The Solalbor Gohaing governs another small territory, including the east end of the island between the Brahmaputra and Kolong rivers, and resides at Koliyabar (Kolliabar A.). He also manages part of the territory called Charidwar, collects the royal revenue, and administers justice. Mr. Arrow-smith, by mistake, places his residence in this territory; but the native's map has placed his name there only to denote that the territory is subject to his authority. His force, stationed at Koliyabar, seems intended to check the conduct of the mountaineers, when they collect their shares of the revenue of Charidwar. A few of his Payiks reside in this territory, but the greater part occupy the east end of the island

near Koliyabar. This officer must be selected from the family of the Bara Gohaing.

The Kajolimukha (Kagolimukh A.) Gohaing has 1000 Payiks, and some guns, and lives at Kajolichauki in the west end of the same island; and lands are allotted to his people in that vicinity. The object of this force seems to be to guard against the encroachments of the Kachharis and Jain-tiyas. Although surrounded by the territory that is placed under the governor of Gohati, and stationed near that place, both he and his people are entirely independent of that officer.

The Jagil (Jaji and Jagi A.) Gohaing lives on the Kolong, and is just such another military officer as the Kajoli Gohaing. He is equally independent of the governor of Kamrup, and his object is to guard against the Kachharis. These two Gohaings may be appointed from any family of the Hatimuriyas.

Dhing Duyar situated on the same island, and lately made independent of the government of Kamrup, is a military station, established also as a check against the Kachharis. It is under the government of a Raja.

Charidwar is a large territory under a kind of government, which, I presume, must be very disagreeable for the subject. According to the native of Nogang, it occupies the whole northern bank of the river, from the eastern boundary of the province of Kamrup to Tikli Potar mukh, where the Brahmaputra divides into two branches, to form the great island called Majuli, a distance said to be about thirteen days journey by land in length. The district, he says, is in general about one and a half day's journey in width, although in some parts its width is not more than one day's journey. The day's journey is said to be from 10 to 12 coses, or from 20 to 24 miles, but 17 perhaps may be nearer the truth. The king of Asam possesses the right of administering justice, and of levying from each plough one rupee in money, and a piece of Muga silk cloth, 8 cubits long and 2 cubits wide, worth from 16 to 20 anas. Three mountain chiefs have each a right to

levy a certain sum from every plough ; and for this purpose each sends a body of armed men, who in the cool season go through the country, live at free quarters, and plunder those who do not pay the customary dues. These three chiefs govern the Kampo Bhoteas, who occupy the highest ridges of the northern mountains in that quarter ; the Miris or Michimis, who occupy the lower hills and some of the plain towards Charidwar ; and the Dophlas, who occupy the lower hills and plain adjacent to the remainder of the same territory. It must indeed be observed, that the present territory of Asam no where reaches to the northern mountains, and that the Deva Raja, or prince of Bhotan, has taken possession of all the territory adjacent to the hills, which belong to him. This I know is a recent usurpation, and there is great reason to believe, that formerly the Kampo Bhoteas, Miris, and Dophlas were subject to Asam ; for in the account given of that country in the Asiatic Researches, it is mentioned, that the northern mountains belonged to it, and produced musk, and horses, which are only the produce of the highest parts. These three countries have not only been able to reject the authority of the king, but levy a share of the revenue from all the low lands on the northern side of the river.

Raja Brajanath, however, gives a different account, and states, that Charidwar is of comparatively small extent, reaching from the Panchneyi, which separates it from Chautiya Kumar to a range of hills on the banks of the Bhairavi river, which is fortified with works of earth, and extends across the whole valley of Asam from the northern to the southern mountains immediately above Koliyabar. This territory, according to him, does not pay tribute to Asam, Kampu, Miri, and Dophla ; but to Asam, Bhotan, Anka, and Dophla, and is evidently that part of Charidwar which, according to the native of Nogang, is under the Solalbor Gohaing. The low lands of Bhotan, subject to the Deva Raja, extend to the Panchneyi, which bounds Charidwar on the west. According to the Raja, above the Bhairavi is a district extending to

the Burayi river, all of which, except some fews (Jaygirs) held by the great officers of the crown, pays one half of its revenues to the Dophlas ; but Asamese officers govern the country. Baskota and Lukimpur, two districts higher up, are in a similar predicament. Then comes the Subonseri river, which separates the Dophlas from the Miri, or Michimi, who receive one-half of the revenue from Mire Bihiya and Pat-sudiya, the former bounded on the west by the Subonseri, and the latter on the east by the extremity of the kingdom of Asam at the Kundil river. So far as I can understand, in these countries divided between Asam and the neighbouring chiefs, there is no form of justice. Each power sends a force, which takes as much as possible from the cultivators. This division perhaps represents the state of the country before the Raja Brajanath left it : since that the whole of these divided territories may have been annexed to Charidwar, and placed under its Boruya, as the native of Nogang represents.

In order to support what authority remains to the enfeebled descendents of heaven (Swarga Deva) and to collect their share of the revenue of Charidwar, the Asamese have separated it into two unequal divisions. The western, as I have already mentioned, is under the management of the Solalbor Gohaing, who resides at Koliyabar, and who is probably assisted by the Ghiladhari Boruya. The eastern portion of this district has been intrusted to an officer called the Charidwar Boruya, who resides at a little distance N. E. from Koliyabar, and who has 1000 Payiks ready to take the field whenever any disturbance arises ; and under such a government commotions are almost perpetual.

### SECTION III. OF THE OFFICERS EMPLOYED IN THE MANAGEMENT OF REVENUE.

I shall now mention several jurisdictions established for the purpose of revenue, and totally independent of the governors of the provinces, or military commanders of the districts in which they are situated.

The custom-houses (Chaukis) towards the frontier of Bengal, have been farmed (Korok) to two Rarhi Brahmans, Kamal and Parasuram, who are called Boruyas. The chief custom-house, Kandar, or Kangrar, usually called Asam Chauki by the English, is situated at a place called Hadira in Pergunah Bausi, nearly opposite to Goyalpara. The Boruyas have some land in the vicinity. There are seven subordinate custom-houses on the banks of the rivers, that form the boundary, and several on various routes, by which goods might pass; but all the duties are paid at Kandar, the others are merely to prevent an illicit transit of goods. The Boruyas pay annually 45,000 rupees to the king, and ought to levy only the very moderate duty of ten per cent, on exports and imports; but the custom has long been to leave this entirely to their discretion, and although there is no absolute law to prohibit the merchants of Bengal from carrying goods to Jorhat or Gohati; yet the speculation has in general turned out very ill, and the Boruya may be said to have a complete monopoly, while the whole trade passes through his hands. Merchants occasionally have gone to Gohati and Jorhat, and have procured orders, that nothing should be taken from them, except the regular duties. To procure these orders costs much trouble and expense. The Boruyas still found means to occasion delay and difficulty, and when the goods arrived at their destination, they were, it is true, sold at an exorbitant price; but payment could not be procured, and no person has dealt with the Asamese, who has not lost enormously by bad debts, the merchants of that country being totally destitute of good faith.

A good many Europeans both English and foreigners, formerly settled at Goyalpara and Yogighopa, and, after having suffered heavy losses by fraud, found that the only proper mode of conducting the business was, to establish a monopoly in opposition to that of the Boruyas; and accordingly they agreed to divide the whole trade into certain shares, which were several times regularly transferred by sale. Each factory, as it was called, hoisted a flag, employed armed men,

and kept in awe both the Bengalese and Asamese merchants. The former were only permitted to supply them with what goods they wanted, and to purchase through their hands ; and the Boruya managed in the same manner the merchants of Asam. Both parties had then very large profits.

On Captain Welsh going to Asam, and the state of the frontier becoming known to Government, no such practices could be continued on the side of Bengal ; so that there the trade was laid entirely open, and this has proved very ruinous. Most of the Bengalese merchants, who have engaged in it, have suffered great loss, and many have been totally ruined. The name of Europeans, and the appearance of a military force, which the Asamese then did not know to be different from the Company's had kept them within some bounds, so that they paid some of the debts which they contracted ; but after they had seen the regulars of Captain Welsh, and knew that the people who hoisted flags had no sort of authority, they have observed no manner of decency ; while the mighty promises which they make, have usually induced the Bengalese traders to give them credit. The Boruya is the only gainer. His monopoly is strengthened, and he takes no more goods from either the merchants of Bengal or of Asam than he can procure at a very low price, and sell at an enormous profit. When the European monopoly was opposed his 100,000 mans of salt (each man containing 40 sers of  $84\frac{10}{16}$  Sicca weight or  $179\frac{1}{2}$  grains) were usually sold in the year. The quantity now is reduced to about 35,000 mans. This, in some measure, may be owing to a diminished demand ; for since the disturbances of Asam, the number of people has been reduced, and those who remain are sunk to a lower ebb of poverty. Still, however, the best judges whom I have consulted seem to think, that the restoration of an European monopoly would increase the export of salt to 60,000 mans ; as in that case the Boruya being necessarily compelled to content himself with more moderate profits, would find it convenient to deal to a larger extent.

I am therefore persuaded, that it would be highly advantageous, not only to the revenue, but to the people of both countries, were the company to establish a custom-house at Goyalpara, under one of their civil servants, through whom all the commerce of Asam should be conducted, he himself being most strictly prohibited from trade; but he should supply the Asamese with whatever salt they wanted, for ready money, at a certain fixed price, and should receive all their goods into his store; selling them at a fixed price, to whatever Bengalese merchant chose to buy for ready money. The merchant of Asam ought of course to be permitted to take back his goods whenever he chose. The merchant of Bengal should, in the same manner, be permitted to sell whatever goods he chose, except salt; but in order to prevent the impositions of the Asamese, this also should be done through the custom-house. The usual honorable dealing of the Company in merchantile concerns, would restore credit to this commerce, which may become of some importance. The most likely means of placing the valuable but neglected territory composing the two eastern divisions of the Ranggapur district on a good footing, would be to purchase whatever rights the landholders may possess to levy exactions on commerce; and the remuneration I would propose for the purchase money is to simplify the duties, and to place the whole on salt. The officer appointed to manage the commerce of Asam could easily manage this, by establishing stores at convenient places where he would sell salt, at the same rate as the Asamese; and the people whom he employed would serve to protect the liberty of trade in every other article. He of course would have a monopoly of salt in the two divisions, so that custom-houses towards Asam would be useless. Nor would much attention to this be required towards the west, as the little that might be occasionally smuggled by land, would require such an expense of carriage, as would not answer to cover the risk of detection; for that would always be considerable, the keepers of stores being interested in a discovery.



The enormous profits that the Boruya now receives may be thus estimated. He gives from 500 to 600 rupees for 102 mans of salt ( $84\frac{10}{16}$  Sicca weight the ser). The former is about what it costs the merchants at Goyalpara, after paying the freight from Narayangunj near Dhaka, and the charges of merchandise ; yet smugglers can afford to buy small quantities from the monopolists of Haworaghat at eight rupees the man (80 Sicca weight the ser) carry it overland to a considerable distance, and run the risk of detection in passing several custom-houses, in a country where the punishments are of the utmost severity. The value, which he puts on the goods of Asam, has risen so high, that few are now taken.

It cannot be expected, that the Boruya would readily give up such profits. He would by all means of stratagems and embargoes oppose the measure that I have proposed, and he would endeavour to procure salt from Ranggapur by the way of the low country of Bhotan, and from Silhet by the Garos and in fact the trade, especially through the latter, is fast on the increase ; but this is entirely owing to the exorbitant rate, at which he sells. The Brahmaputra is the natural and only advantageous channel for the commerce of both countries ; and it must be some grand defect in the manner of conducting the intercourse between them, that compels the merchant to follow any other.

The exports from Bengal to Asam at present may be about 35,000 mans ( $84\frac{10}{16}$  Sicca weight the ser. and two per cent addition, as a present to the Boruya).

R.

Salt at $5\frac{1}{2}$ rupees	..	192,500
Fine pulse	..	800
Ghiu (1000 mans)	..	1,600
Sugar	..	1,000
Stone beads	..	2,000
Coral	..	1,000
Jewels and Pearls	..	5,000
Cutlery and glass-ware (European)	..	500

	R.
Spices ..	1,000
Paints ..	500
Copper ..	4,800
Red Lead ..	1,000
English Woolens ..	2,000
Tafetas ..	2,000
Benares silk cloth, called Kinkhap ..	500
Satin ..	1,000
Gold and silver cloth ..	1,000
Shells ..	100
Muslin ..	10,000
	<hr/>
	R. 228,300
	<hr/>

The Exports from Asam are about

10,000 mans of stick lac ..	R. 35,000
Muga silk, 65 mans ..	11,350
Muga cloth, 75 mans ..	17,500
Manjista, or Indian madder ..	500
Black pepper, 50 mans ..	500
Long pepper, 50 mans ..	300
Cotton with seed, 7,000 mans ..	35,000
Ivory ..	6,500
Bell-metal vessels ..	1,500
Mustard-seed, 15,000 mans ..	20,000
Iron hoes ..	600
Slaves, 100 ..	2,000
Thaikol fruit, 50 mans ..	150
	<hr/>
	R. 130,900
	<hr/>

The balance is paid in gold from the mines, and in silver. This gold comes from the mine called Pakerguri, and is contained in the sand at the junction of the Donsiri or Donhiri (Donheeriah A.) with the Brahmaputra, about thirty two miles

in a straight line from Gohati. The officer who superintends is an Asamese, and is subject only to the immediate orders of the court. He is allowed 1000 men, who are called SONDHANI, with officers of ten and twenty, and are all paid in land. He possesses the charge of police, and the administration of justice in the district which these occupy. They begin to work the mine in ASWIN (15th September to 14th October), and each man must deliver one and a half rupee weight of gold dust. If he is successful he may keep whatever more he finds; but he must make up whatever deficiencies ill luck or indolence have occasioned. The mine therefore, produces to the royal treasury 15,000 rupees weight of gold dust; for every person employed is paid in land. The rupee weight of gold dust is worth twelve rupees of silver; but it is adulterated and formed into small balls, which sell at Goyalpara for eleven sicca rupees for the weight of an Asamese rupee. The mine, therefore, is worth to the king somewhat more than 18,000 sicca rupees a year.

In the territory called Doyaing, S.W. from Jorhat a day's journey, there is an iron mine, which is wrought in the same manner on account of the king. It supplies the whole country with abundance; but I did not learn what amount is returned to the royal treasury.

In the province of Sodiya is an important mine of salt, which in case of a dispute with Bengal is the only supply on which the country can depend, and the supply is scanty. It is under the superintendency of an officer, named Mohonghat Boruya, and produces annually to the royal treasury about 40,000 rupees. So far as I can understand the salt is found in the form of brine, by digging pools in a certain small extent. The water is evaporated by boiling, and the salt is brought to Jorhat in the joints of large bamboos. It is purer and higher priced than the salt of Bengal. The mine is farmed, and is not wrought by the king's people.

At Solaphat, which seems to be the Sewlaul chokey of Mr. Wood's survey, there is a custom-house on the Brahma-

putra, where duties are taken on all goods passing between Kamrup and Asam proper. It is farmed to a Boruya at 5000 rupees a year.

At Roha, or Rosa, on the Kolong river, is a Boruya, who collects duties on the transit of goods, and pays annually a fixed rent.

Another Boruya farms, at 6000 rupees a year, the duties of which are collected at Dorong-Bata-Kuchi, about two miles from the Brahmaputra, on the Monggol Doho river. These duties consist of four anas on each of the 6000 Payiks sent from Dorong to work for the king, of a hoe and some rice, which each of them pays in addition, and which altogether may be worth 3000 rupees, and of from four to eight anas on every cow or ox that is sold in Dorong. Some allege that the money paid by these three last mentioned officers is on account of the person who farms the custom-houses towards Bengal; while others of my informants allege that it goes directly to the royal treasury.

A person called the Wazir Boruya, of a Kolita family, that is in hereditary possession of the office, has charge of the intercourse with Bhotan. He resides at Simlyavari, one day's journey north from the house of the Dorong Raja. He has some lands, and pays nothing to the king, except presents. All the messengers and traders of Bhotan, and these last are in fact all servants of the Deva Raja, must go first to Simlya. The Boruya there levies no duties, but generally receives presents, in order to prevent his throwing impediments in the way of business, and no one is allowed to purchase at Simlya, without employing him as a broker. The Bhoteas may however take what part of their goods they please to a place called Haju, which is north from Gohati, and there they may dispose of them.

### CHAPTER III. OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE, DIVISIONS OF THE PEOPLE, AND RELIGION.

The officers under whom the Payiks or servants of the crown are placed, the persons (Chaudhuris) who farm the revenue of the lands which are let for rent ; and every one who has received free lands have charge of the police within the bounds which their people cultivate ; they also settle small disputes that arise among their dependants, and all assume the right of whipping, but this seems illegal. The power of inflicting punishment is reserved for the principal officers and Rajas ; and in all civil cases, except in the men granted to the three great counsellors of state, there is an appeal to the three provincial courts in which the Bara Boruya, the Bara Phukon, and the Sodiya Khaoya Gohaing preside. These have full jurisdiction in all cases, civil and criminal, and without reference to the royal authority, may inflict punishment short of death ; but no person is put to death without an order from the king, and that order is always communicated in writing, and is procured by a written account of the proceedings having been submitted to the royal consideration. In such cases the trial is carried on openly, and the chief judge or governor of the province seems never to condemn without the concurrence of his assessors, who in Kamrup are six Phukons, so that unfair trials are not usual ; but it is alleged, that the guilty, who can bribe, are often allowed to escape with impunity, while the punishments inflicted on the guilty poor are exceedingly severe. In fact the possession of jurisdiction in police, and in civil and criminal law, without any salary or regular fees, is considered as a valuable and productive authority.

The capital offences are treason, murder, rape, arson, and voluntary abortion. Rebels are never excused ; for other offences pardon may be purchased. Capital punishment extends to the whole family of a rebel, parents, brothers, sisters, wives, and children. Offenders are put to death in

various manners, by cutting their throats, by empaling them, by grinding them between two wooden cylinders, by sawing them asunder between two planks, by beating them with hammers, and by applying burning hoes to different parts until they die. This is the most horrible.

Except the gang from Bengal, there are few robbers and atrocious house-breakers or pirates. Such persons are punished in a summary manner by thrusting out their eyes, or by cutting off the knee-pans. The wretches usually die of the latter operation, but survive the former. Both punishments are inflicted by the sole order of the chief minister in Asam proper, or of the governor of the two other provinces. Petty thefts are very common, and are punished by whipping or by cutting off the nose or ears. The first punishment may legally be inflicted by any considerable officer, such as a Raja or Phukon; but the two latter can only be inflicted by the chief judge of the district.

The three great counsellors of state possess the same jurisdiction over their own people that the governors of provinces do in their respective countries.

The administration of civil affairs seems to be worse arranged than the criminal law; and less odium being attached to injustice in this respect, the judges seem to be uncommonly venal. In the Bara Boruya's court he receives all complaints verbally, and immediately gives some person orders to investigate the cause, and to report the truth, and the cause is always decided according to the report of the umpire. Many officers attend the court, who receive allowances with a view of rendering them fit to be entrusted with this delicate office. These are as follows; three Tambulis, one Naosalya, one Takla-Bora, one Majumdar-Boruya, one Duliya-Boruya, one Chabukdhara-Boruya one Keulya-Boruya, and twelve Rajkhaoyas. Even these are accused of taking bribes very openly; and the accusation seems to be well founded, as the judge often sends a menial servant or needy follower to settle disputes, and to give them an opportunity of a little gain.

The system of raising a revenue by presents is almost universal in eastern countries, and in none is it carried to a more pernicious extent than in Asam. The tenant, who for a plough-gate of land pays only two rupees to the king, in various other kinds of exactions pays an addition of between four and five. Each petty officer has a share, part of which he must disgorge to his superiors, while these again are finally squeezed by the king. The Rani-raja is estimated to pay 5000 rupees a year to various persons at Gohati, as I have before mentioned. The composition of fourteen rupees, therefore, sometimes accepted by the king in lieu of the service rendered by three men, is not what these men pay, but only what goes immediately to the king. The management of 1000 Payiks is considered as a sufficient reward for a considerable officer of government, even when he receives their composition, and remits it to the treasury, or when he exacts their labour on the king's account: for his trouble he is only allowed a commission of five per cent and from his profits he must make presents to all his superiors, until a share reaches the throne, to which offerings are made by between twenty and thirty of the principal persons of the kingdom. The presents are made on holidays, and are called Bhetis. The two chief Bhetis are on the last days of the months Chairtro and Paush. The two next in value are the festivals called Dolyatra and Durgapuja. On each of these occasions each of the tenantry, Payiks, and petty officers, present the commanders of a thousand, or Rajas, or Zemindars with rice, pulse, extract of sugar-cane, and oil, perhaps to the value of half a rupee.

The principal casts and tribes in Asam are as follows:

The Rarhi Brahmans of Bengal, as I have before said, have obtained the spiritual guidance of the king and principal officers of the court, and it is probably through their influence that two men of the same cast have procured the lucrative farm of the trade with Bengal. The spiritual guide and officiating priest of the king (Guru and Purohit) are men of great reputation for learning.

There are Brahmans called Asamese. They are Vaidikas of Kanyakubja, and one of them told me that they were introduced from that place by Viswa Singha, the Koch Raja ; but that having penetrated into Asam they no longer intermarried with those who remained in the western parts of Kamrup, as they could not mutually be informed how far each party had preserved its purity. Before their arrival there were learned men among the Kolitas, who were Gurus for all the people.

Many Kamrupi Vaidika Brahmans are now settled in Asam, and it is said that among them there are many persons learned in Hindu science. Very few among either the Vaidikas of Asam or Kamrup worship the Saktis or female destructive spirits. They are chiefly of the sect of Vishnu. They have a few academies (Chauvaris) where the grammar called the Ratnamala, law and metaphysics are taught, and some Pandits are skilled in astrology and magic. The grand study with the Mahajons, or spiritual guides, is the Sri Bhagwat.

Some of the Vaidikas in this country have degraded themselves, have become Varna, and instruct the impure tribes, a meanness to which none of those in Bengal have submitted.

The persons called Man Singha's Brahmans are pretty numerous, and are employed in all low offices, totally unconnected with religion.

The Deo-dhaings, descended from the religious guide of Khuntai, may now amount to thirty men, besides women and children. Their chief is called Deo-dhaing Boruya, and has the charge of the god Chung, of his worship, and of the royal insignia, such as the sword Hyangdang, and the sacred feathers. The Deo-dhaings possess a learning and language peculiar to themselves, and keep them a profound secret ; but they have in many points adopted the worship of Vishnu. They are still highly respected.

In the eastern part of the present dominions of Asam, beyond Koliyabar, and exclusive of the Kampos, Miris, and



Dophlas, the most numerous class of inhabitants are the Ahams, or governing nation. Those legitimately descended from the companions of Khuntai still retain all the principal offices of state. They may be considered as the nobility, and are said to be now reduced to twenty-six families, two Danggoriyas, one Duyara, one Dihingga, one Lahon one Sondike, and twenty Hatimuriyas. Of these last five families are attached to each of the Danggoriyas, and ten to the Barapatra Gohaing, who is descended of Khuntai. The remainder of the nation is by some alleged to owe its origin to the illegitimate issue of these families; but, as I have before mentioned, many of them are probably descended from the soldiers and servants who accompanied the prince. It is generally admitted, that the Ahams on their arrival had no women, but espoused those of the country; and the royal family have since had frequent intermarriages with the daughters of neighbouring princes; but since the introduction of cast the Ahams confine their marriages to their own tribe. The whole have now adopted the language of Bengal, as their colloquial dialect, and have also relinquished the use of beef; but about a fourth part have yet no other priests than the Deodhaings. The remaining three-fourths have adopted the religion of the Hindus, chiefly as taught by the followers of Madhava Acharya.

In the parts east from Koliyabar the tribe next most numerous is called Chutiya, and is divided into two classes, called Hindu and Aham. The former have abandoned many of their impure customs, and have received degraded (Varna) Brahmans as their spiritual guides. The latter wallow in their impurity, and adhere to the Deodhaings.

West from Koliyabar, the two most numerous tribes, and nearly equal in strength, are the Kolitas and Koch.

The Kolitas, many of whom are settled in the Ranggapur district, belonging to the company, are also a numerous tribe in Asam proper. Those who can read are called Kayasthas, and are the religious guides for most of the others, and for many of the Koch. The others follow all manner of trades

and occupations. They intermarry with the Koch, and are accused of being a great deal too easy towards their wives, many of whom cannot resist temptation. They speak the language of Bengal, and have nearly the same customs with the pure Hindus of that country, only they are still more strict in eating and drinking. They are considered by the Brahmans of that country as pure Sudras. Their features are less strongly marked as being of Chinese origin, than those of the Koch.

The Koch are very numerous in the province of Kamrup, especially in Dorong, the Raja of which is one of their number. They are less abstinent than the Kolitas, and are considered as lower; but still they are admitted to be pure.

The Nodiyals, or Dorn, are more numerous than the Koch, as they extend over both Asam proper and Kamrup. Their manners exactly resemble those of the colony, which has settled at Goyalpara, and which I intend afterwards to describe. Notwithstanding their care in eating they are considered as impure.

There are a good many Heluya-Keyots who cultivate the ground, and Keyots who fish. The former are pure, and usually assume the title of Kaibarta: the latter are impure, but have not adopted the Muhammadan doctrine, as those of Ranggapur in the Company's dominions have done.

The Moriyas speak the Bengalese language, but have abandoned themselves to eat beef, and to drink strong liquors.

The Rabhas,	}	I intend to describe when I give an account of the Company's provinces.
The Mech,		
The Kachharis,		

The Garos will be described as a neighbouring nation, although a good many reside in Asam. Many of them have been in some measure converted; but they are very apt to revert to their impure habits.

The Hiras are an impure cast, who make pots, and will be mentioned in my account of the Company's provinces.

Most trades are carried on by the Kolitas and Koch, without distinction of casts; but many artists and people have lately come from Bengal, and will probably, in a great measure, succeed in separating different professions into different casts.

The Malakors, called here Phulmali, make artificial flowers.

The Notis, or dancers and musicians, are here employed in the temples, are considered as a pure cast, and their women are not common prostitutes. Even the purest Brahmans condescend to give them instruction.

The washerræen refuse to perform their office for any persons except the royal family and Brahmans; and have been elevated to the rank of purity.

Many cotton-weavers have been introduced, and are partly of the impure tribe called Jogi, and partly Muham-medans, who are called Jolas.

Some Haris, or scavengers, have been introduced, and have brought a disgrace on the profession, which secures them in the exclusive enjoyment of their filth.

There are also some fishermen of the impure tribe called Chandal.

In the province of Kamrup there are many Moslems, but so degenerated into heathen superstition, that even those of Goyalpara refuse their communion. The government gives them no sort of molestation.

On the whole, the most numerous tribe is the Dom, next come the Kolita and Koch, nearly equal, then the Aham, then the Keyot, then the Chutiya. The number of any other tribe, when compared with these, is inconsiderable.

The persons who instruct the worshippers of Vishnu, that is most of those who have adopted the Hindu religion, are called Mahajons, and live in Chhatras, just like those whom I found in the eastern divisions of Rangapur. They are however more powerful, several of them having from ten to fifteen thousand men entirely devoted to their service. Their office is hereditary in certain families. The king, on a vacancy appoints any person of the family that he pleases; but the appointment, unfortunately, is for life. The Brahmans who are elevated to this high dignity, separate from their women and all worldly pleasures, and admit among their disciples only Ahams, Kolitas, Koch, Kaibartas, Notis, and Phulmalis. The Kolita Mahajons do not separate from their families, and admit among their followers all Hindus that are reckoned pure, and also the fishermen called Dom, a numerous and licentious mob, by whom, in a great measure, the government of Gaurinath was overthrown, and the country reduced to its present misery.

The chief Chhatras, or religious instructors, are as follows.

In the province of Kamrup :

- |                           |                     |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Barepetta, a Kolita.   |                     |
| 2. Pat Bausi,             | } Vaidika Brahmans. |
| 3. Biha Kuchi,            |                     |
| 4. Bhawanipur, a Koliata. |                     |
| 5. Palasvari,             | } Vaidika Brahmans. |
| 6. Srihati,               |                     |

In the province of Asam proper :

- |                    |                     |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Aunihati,       |                     |
| 2. Dakshinpat,     | } Vaidika Brahmans. |
| 3. Kuravasi,       |                     |
| 4. Gormur Chhatra, |                     |

- |                |          |
|----------------|----------|
| 5. Dihingga,   |          |
| 6. Noraya,     |          |
| 7. Sologuri,   |          |
| 8. Chamguri,   | Kolitas. |
| 9. Koyamariya, |          |
| 10. Mahamari,  |          |

When Captain Welsh drove the Mahamari and his rabble from the possession of the kingdom they retired to Byang-mara, south from Sodiya. The Mahajon, and many of his followers, still remain there, and have several times since been in rebellion, but many have privately retired home, and have adopted other spiritual guides. This Chhatra may therefore be considered as in some degree abolished, especially as the Guru has retired from his original residence, which was near Jorhat, at Mr. Wood's Awamarrah gong.

In the province of Sodiya the worshippers of Vishnu are not numerous enough to have procured religious guides that are of any importance.

There are in Asam several places of pilgrimage that are remarkable among the Hindus, especially three temples of Kamakhya, or Kamakshia, at Nilachol, near Gohati in Kamrup, at Koliyabar in Asam proper, and at Dikkorbasini in Sodiya. People from all parts of India frequent the first, and the temple has much land. A Boruya, whose title is Sebachola, resides at the place. He has eleven subordinates, who take care of the temple, and its lands, and who collect money from the pilgrims on the king's account.

## CHAPTER IV. PRODUCTIONS, MANUFACTURES, AND LABOURERS.

Salidhan, or transplanted winter rice, forms three-fourths of the whole crops.

Ahudhan, or summer rice, and Uridhan, or winter rice, that is sown broad cast in low land, are also pretty considerable crops. A little Borodhan, or spring rice, is also raised.

Next to rice the most considerable crop is a kind of mustard called Vihar. It is the oil of this that is chiefly used. The quantity of Sesamum is very inconsiderable.

Wheat, barley, and millet are very little used.

Little or no pulse was formerly used, and the *Cytisus* *Cajan*, called Garo Mas, was only cultivated for rearing the Lac insect; but it is now preserved for its pulse, and other plants are used for rearing the Lac, which is done exactly in the same manner as in the district of Ranggapur.

The most common pulse in Asam is the *Phaseolus* *max*, called Mati-Mas, but they have also the Mug-Mas, or *Phaseolus* *minimus* of Rumph, the Kola-Mas, or *Lathyrus* *sativus*, the Borkola-Mas, or *Pisum* *arvense*, and the Mohu-Mas, or *Ervum* *Lens*.

The Asamese raise black pepper, it is said to a great extent. Very little comes to Bengal; but it is probable, that a good deal may find its way towards the east. It is said to be raised somewhat as betle-leaf is usually cultivated in Bengal. They have also as warm seasoning long pepper, and the pepper called Choyi. ginger, turmeric, capsicum, onions, and garlic. Their acid seasonings are Tamarinds, Autengga, (*Dillennia* *speciosa*,) Amra (*Spondias* *Amara*,) Jolpayi, (*Perinkara* *H.M.*,) Kamrangga, (*Averrhoa* *carambola*,) and Thaikol of two kinds, the Bara, which is the largest and best, and the Kuji, which, in the botanical garden at Calcutta, is called *Garcinia* *pedunculata*.

The betle-leaf is raised on trees in every garden. There is plenty of tobacco, and betle-nut. Opium is raised in abundance for consumption, and there is much used.

Sugar-cane thrives, most of it is eaten fresh. A little extract is prepared; but no sugar is made. Cocoa-nuts are very scarce, and no palm-wine is extracted.

Their kitchen-gardens and fruit are much the same as in Ranggapur, only the pomegranate is said to be very common, and there are plenty of oranges.

Cotton is reared mostly by the hill-tribes, and is little used. The *Crotolaria juncea*, and *Corchorus* are cultivated; but the fishermen use mostly the fibres of the Rike or *urtica nivea* W.

No less than four different kinds of silk-worms are reared, and the different silks form the greater part of the clothing, and are exported in some quantity.

The silk-worm reared on the mulberry is the least common.

That which is produced on a species of *Laurus*, and is called Muga, is the most common. The tree is planted, and its branches are pruned, but the insect is fed on the tree as it grows. Some people who have seen the insect, say, that it is the same with the Tasar of Bengal, but the silk is so different that I suppose they are mistaken. There are two crops; the silk procured in the beginning of the dry season (Kartik) is red, that which is cut in the end of spring (Jaishtha) is white, and is reckoned the best.

The silk called Medanggori is reared in Asam proper, on a tree that is cultivated, but of what kind I did not learn, nor could I procure the insect. It is higher priced than the Muga.

The silk called Erendi is reared on the *Ricinus* in great quantity as in Ranggapur.

In Kamrup oxen are the common labouring cattle; in Asam proper many buffaloes are employed in the plough.

Sheep are very scarce, and goats are not numerous. Ducks are more so than fowls ; but many persons keep game-cocks. There are very few horses, and no asses.

The black-smiths are mostly Kolitas and Koch ; but of late some men of the Kamar cast have been introduced, and make locks, padlocks, sacrificial knives, spears, spike-nails and clamps for building boats, and match-locks. These are innovations, and scissors are still unknown. The national workmen make the plough-share, bills, hatchets, hoes, pick-axes, knives, spindles for spinning, the rod for cleaning the implement used in smoking tobacco, lamps of different kinds, pots for boiling milk or water, and stoves for cooking ; all very rude.

The gold-smiths are mostly Kolitas, but a few of the proper cast have been introduced from Bengal. The person who wishes anything made furnishes the metals, of which the workmen receive a share for their trouble. They have therefore no capital, except a few miserable tools.

The copper-smiths are mostly Kolitas. They furnish the metal, but none of them have a capital of more than a hundred rupees. They are reckoned by the Bengalese very skilful in working in bell-metal, so that some is sent to Bengal, although all the copper comes through that country. Much copper furniture is said to be used.

Some people of the Hira and Moriya tribes make brass wire, of which they prepare several small articles of furniture.

There are many carpenters of the Kolita and other tribes, and they are chiefly employed to construct boats and canoes. They also make very coarse chests and bedsteads, with the implements of agriculture, and the posts, beams, and doors of the few houses which are permitted to be constructed in such magnificent style of building. No capital.

Many of all casts work in bamboo. No capital.



The native women of all casts, from the queens downward, weave the four kinds of silk that are produced in the country, and with which three-fourths of the people are clothed. Considerable quantities of the two coarser kinds are also exported. There may be one loom for every two women; and in great families there are eight or ten, which are wrought by the slave girls. The raw material is seldom purchased; each family spins and weaves the silk which it rears, and petty dealers go round and purchase for ready money whatever can be spared for exportation, or for the use of the few persons who rear none of their own. The silk cloth serves generally for that which is wrapped round the waist of both sexes, and is made of different sizes, according to the purpose for which it is to be employed.

1. Dhuti from 8 to 16 cubits long, and from 2 to  $2\frac{1}{4}$  wide. One end is wrapped round the waist, the other end is thrown round the shoulders. They are used both by men and women.

2. The Rihe is wrapped round the waist of the women, but being short, does not admit of passing round the shoulders. The pieces are 6 cubits long, by  $1\frac{1}{2}$  wide.

3. Mekla seems to be the original female dress of Kamrup, and is the same with the dress of the Koch women in Ranggapur, and with the female dress in Ava, and of the shepherd tribe in Mysore.

4. The Chhelang is a piece for wrapping round the shoulders of men in cold weather; it is 6 cubits long by 3 wide.

5. Jhardar, or Mongjuri, is a piece used by women for the same purpose. It is from 4 to 5 cubits long and from 2 to  $2\frac{1}{2}$  wide. The Jhardar is of a flowered pattern, the Mongjuri is plain.

6. Mosaris are pieces, 30 cubits long by  $1\frac{3}{4}$ , or 2 cubits wide, and are intended for curtains. They are of a very thin fabric, and are flowered.

The proper silk, or Pata, as it is called in Asam, is only used for the Dhutis of the great. Each costs from one to eight rupees.

The Medanggori silk, which constitutes the dress of the higher ranks, is wrought into Dhutis, most of which are dyed red with Lac, but some are white. They cost from two and a half to six rupees, chiefly owing to a difference of size, being all nearly of the same fineness. Rihs cost from one to four rupees.

The Muga silk is the dress of the middle ranks. Dhutis, which are mostly undyed, sell from one to four rupees. Meklas from one to three rupees. The Jhardars from two and a half to four rupees. The curtains from one to six rupees. Rihaes from one half to three rupees.

The Erendi silk serves as clothing for the poor. Rihs cost from four to six anas. Chhelangs from eight anas to two rupees. Meklas from eight anas to one rupee. Mongjuris eight anas.

The cotton weavers are foreigners, Jogis and Jolas, and both men and women work. They have a little capital to enable them to purchase thread. Small dealers purchase the cloth, and hawk it about; for there are no shops, and few markets. The cotton cloth is mostly used as turbans, as veils, and as wrappers for the shoulders, and towels. The finest which they make sells for ten rupees a piece, and is twelve cubits long by three wide.

There are no dyers nor printers of chints. The small proportion of the silk that is dyed has this operation performed on it by the women by whom it is woven.

Turners are of all casts. They work in buffaloes' horn and ivory. The horn makes one set of chess-men, the ivory the other. They make also a kind of tables used in gaming; and on which four persons play with men and dice, somewhat like back-gammon. The same people make cups and toys of ivory.

The king has in his house some men who make very fine mats, fans, and head-scratchers of ivory, all Chinese arts. These people are said to be able to straighten the tooth of an elephant, by covering it with a thick coat of clay and cow-dung, and then exposing it to the fire.

Many people make mats ; some are made of a species of *Thalia*, and some are made of the *Sola* or *Aeschynomene diffusa*.

There are stone-cutters who make plates, cups, and stones for grinding curry-stuff. The stone is the produce of the country.

Oil-men are of all casts. They use both the mill commonly employed in Ranggapur, and also press the oil by two boards, which are acted upon by a long lever. In Asam proper the mustard seed is usually parched and powdered in a mortar before it is squeezed.

Garlands and artificial flowers, made of *Sola*, are made and sold by *Kolitas* and others ; but a few workmen have been introduced from Bengal.

There are a few brick-makers and bricklayers who are employed by the king, no other person being permitted to use bricks.

The art of making butter or cheese is unknown. Every family curdles its own milk, so that there are no *Goyalas*.

The potters do not know the use of the wheel, and merely knead their clay into form.

No one is allowed to wear shoes without a special license from the king, and it is an indulgence that is very rarely granted. At the capital there are a few Bengalese shoe-makers, who are ready, whenever his Majesty chooses, to have a pair of shoes, or to indulge one of his chiefs with that luxury.

There are no confectioners, no butchers, no bakers, no tailors.

Both Kolitas and Koch act as barbers.

The tradesmen in general have farms or lands, and some of their family cultivate them ; for persons who cultivate for a share can seldom be procured, servants can very rarely be hired, and people who have no power cannot keep slaves : these would be a property too visible and moveable. The artists are mostly in the service of the king (Payiks), and as usual work four months in the year on his account, and receive a farm free of rent.

Every man who has a farm must, in general, work it himself for labourers, as I have said, cannot be procured either for a share of the crop, or for money. The only assistance that can be procured, is that of slaves, and a good many are employed by persons who have influence sufficient to secure property so tangible ; and these are chiefly men dedicated to religion, who have lands free of rent.

All the domestics are slaves, and they are pretty numerous, every man of rank having several. The slaves are procured from among the necessitous, who mortgage themselves, in the same manner as in the eastern divisions of Ranggapur. Some are exported. About a hundred of pure cast are annually sold to Bengal. They are mostly children : the girls are chiefly bought by prostitutes, and cost from twelve to fifteen rupees. A Koch boy costs twenty-five rupees, a Kolita fifty. Slaves of impure tribes are sold to the Garos, and many are said to be sent to Nora, from whence they are probably exported to Ava.

## PART II

### **Account of the Countries Adjoining to Asam**

Concerning these countries in general I can give only a few loose hints and reports ; but even these may be acceptable, as concerning by far the greater part of them next to nothing is known to Europeans.



## CHAPTER I. OF THE COUNTRIES NORTH OF THE BRAHMAPUTRA.

The most important neighbour of Asam toward the north, and the best known to Europeans is what we call Bhotan, governed in temporals by the Deva (Deb) Raja.

The territory of the Vihar Raja, when I visited that country, was so much interposed between Bhotan and the Company's possessions, that I had little opportunity of conversing with the subjects of the Deva Raja. Most of those whom I saw, were the Koch or Rajbangsis, who occupy the low country conquered by the Bhoteas, who are mere Bengalese, and who know very little of the real people of Bhotan, or of their manners. A large caravan comes annually to Ranggapur; but I found the chief persons so much engaged in their commercial affairs, that I could only procure a few hours conversation with three of their Mukhis, who are men of some rank.

For an account of the country, people, and government of Bhotan proper, I must therefore, in a great measure, refer the reader to Turner's Embassy to Tibet or Thibet, although the materials which he affords, are rather scanty. I may however observe, that the country would appear to differ little in its appearance or productions from Nepal, as I have described it. I shall here chiefly mention the state of the low country, which has been conquered from Kamrup, having had no opportunity of learning any thing satisfactory concerning the interior parts of the country.

Bhotan is in general separated from the territory subject to Gorkha by the Tista river, and so far as I can learn, extends east to the Panchneyi. According to Major Rennell the Tista comes from the mountains in about  $88^{\circ}32'E.$  long. from Greenwich; and the Panchneyi is in about  $92^{\circ}30'$ . The length of Bhotan therefore may be nearly 4 degrees, which in lat.  $27^{\circ}$  will give about 240 British miles. The width is very inconsiderable. The boundary towards Thibet, subject to

China, seems in general, to be the highest part of the land ; all that is watered by rivers running south belongs to Bhotan proper, and all that is watered by rivers running north belongs to the Chinese. The mountainous tract occupied by the real Bhoteas, probably does not on an average of horizontal distance, exceed 40 or 50 miles in width. South from that is a hilly, but lower tract of perhaps 10 or 15 miles, horizontal distance, in width, which is occupied by Kachharis, Mech, and other rude tribes ; and south from thence is a plain, which in different parts varies from 10 to 20 miles in width, which is chiefly occupied by Koch or Rajbangsis, and which is a recent acquisition made by conquest, during the weakness of the Koch, Mogul, and Asamese governments.

The government of Bhotan is said by all the natives with whom I conversed, to be a theocracy ; that is a person, who is considered as an incarnation of God, and who is called Dharma Raja, is its nominal head. This sovereign does not marry, and lives after the usual silly manner of such persons ; and the government is carried on by his viceregent, who is the Deva Raja, and who ought to be appointed by the Deity ; but, so far as I can learn, the decision of the sword is as usual taken for the will of God: the Dharma Raja is a mere recluse monk, and his name only is used in the government. It must, however, be observed, that no such personage is noticed by Mr. Turner, who throughout his work considers the Deva Raja (Daeb) as sovereign, and represents him as of very monkish habits, and as a Lama or incarnation of Deity, the character given by the natives of the Dharma Raja. The Bhoteas, so far as I can learn, are Bouddhists of the school of Sakiya Singha, and of course admit the worship of the Linga, and of the Saktis, and the eating of everything that is considered horrid or impure by the followers of Vyasa.

There are said to be eighteen passes (Duyars) from the low country to the mountains ; and several of the most considerable are placed under the command of officers called Subahs, who are removeable at pleasure, and who represent the Deva Raja in his judicial, military, financial, municipal, and



mercantile capacities; for this chief occupies every branch of public economy, unless it be the spiritual, which he perhaps relinquishes to the supposed incarnation of the Deity.

Whether or not the power of the Subahs extends into the interior of their country, or is confined to the defence of the passes, and to the government of the low country between these and the southern frontier, I did not learn. Captain Turner, however, informs us, that the Subahs are officers subordinate to the Pitos who govern provinces.

In the hot and rainy season the Subah usually resides at a fortress on his mountains. In the cold season he descends to the lower hills, and often visits even the plains, either to enforce obedience or to invade the territory of the neighbouring states. Even on such occasions their armies are not large, seldom consisting of more than 1000 men, armed with swords, battle-axes, and poisoned arrows, and defended by leathern jerkins, boots, and caps. They issue suddenly from their passes, make a rapid march, surprise the refractory subject or enemy, and murder every human being, male and female, young and old, that falls into their hands; they then suddenly withdraw, and by the terror of such dreadful punishments endeavour to make their opponents agree to what they propose.

When a Subah comes in a more peaceable manner to settle trifling disputes, in which he expects no opposition, he brings from 100 to 200 soldiers, but in other respects is meanly attended. Being a suspicious people, even on these occasions, they surround their camp at night with poisoned arrows stuck in the ground, so as to leave the points only projecting.

Both the low-hilly country at the foot of the mountains, and the plain on the southern frontier are divided into small territories; and each is placed under an officer, who collects the revenue, and has charge of the police. Some of these are chiefs of the subdued nations; for no Bhotea has settled in these parts: others are Bhoteas who are appointed by the Deva Raja, and are removeable at pleasure. The hereditary chiefs, so far as I learned, pay a fixed tribute, and the Bhotea

officers collect the land-rent on account of the government. In the western part of the kingdom these officers are called Katmas ; in the eastern they were named to me Luskurs ; but this name was given to them by the Bengalese, and seems to be a Kamrupi word for any subordinate officer, employed in the collection of revenue, and in the language of Bhotan Katma is every where, probably, the title which ought to be given to these officers

The proper Katmas are appointed by the Deva Raja, and can only be removed by his authority ; but some persons under that name are occasionally appointed by the Subhas, and are employed to settle affairs of some importance. The Katmas let the lands without any established maximum, and the rent is nominally very low ; but from four times to six times the rent is taken under various pretexts called Babiya. The Katmas seem to have a considerable profit, very nearly equal, it is said, to the revenue which they remit to their government.

Neither these collectors, nor the hereditary chiefs have any right to inflict punishment ; but they may apprehend all criminals and send them to the Subah, with an account of the evidence ; and it is said, that the Subah is in general entirely guided by this report, and punishes the person sent to him, unless he is able to buy a release. This, it is said, may be done, even in cases of murder ; and it is alleged, that 126 rupees is considered as the known price, which a person, who has committed murder, must pay in order to escape with impunity.

The lowest officers of government, exclusive of messengers or the like, are called Mukhis. These are generally taken into the service of the state when young, and are men of family, who have received such education as the country affords. They are employed as subordinates both by the Deva Raja and Subahs, and transact business in every branch. It is from among them that all Katmas, Subahs, and other high officers, are appointed.

The western part of the plain, which formerly belonged to the Company's territory called Battrishazari, having been

ceded to the Bhoteas by Mr. Hastings without dispute, is still in a tolerable state, as the Bhoteas are not sufficiently daring to invade the Company's territory ; so that there has been no dispute in that quarter, and the theocracy has not as yet had time to produce its usual ruin. But towards the east of Battrishazari the whole low country is in a very wretched state, and presents only a few miserable huts, thinly scattered among immense thickets of reeds, or a few Sal forests. The hereditary chiefs of the Koch, to whom it belonged, having often attempted resistance, the barbarous invasions of the Bhoteas have frequently taken place. These, indeed, had spread desolation over all the northern frontier of the two eastern divisions of the Rangapur district ; but of late the Bhoteas have not ventured to make any attack on these, and that part of the country is beginning to improve.

The whole of the country west from the Gadadhar (Gaddada A.) seems to be under the immediate management of the officers of government, and the greater part of the country east from that river is under the management of hereditary chiefs.

The governor who resides next to the frontier of Gorkha is the Subah of Dalimkoth (Dellamcott A.). Next to him is the Subah of Lukidwar or duyar (Luckiduor A.) and then the Subah of Baksa dwar (Buxadewar) ; but at several intermediate places there would appear to be Katmas entirely independent of these Subhas, who are the only officers of that rank west of the Gadadhar. East from that river is the Subah of Baradwar. The level country under him seems to be subject to a hereditary chief, who possesses Bholka and the larger Guma, both on the eastern of the Gadadhar, and the lesser Guma, which is a small territory west from Koyimari, and surrounded on one side by Vihar, and on the other by the territory of the Company. The house of this chief, which I saw from the opposite bank of the river at Guma, consists of a few miserable huts, constructed entirely of reeds, without even a bamboo frame, and are inferior to what a farmer with one plough would occupy near Calcutta. His country seemed nearly a desert. His name is Pran Singha, and he is the son of

Puran Singha. Between Bholka (Bolka A.) and the mountains of Baradwar is a district called Holdivari, which seems insignificant, as it is under a Kotwal, a kind of officer, who is little better than the chief of a village. He is a Rajbangsi, and is named Joynath.

The next Subah is the governor of Ripudwar, who, in the plains, has under his authority only a miserable district called Raymana, which occupies the western bank of the Sankosh (Sunecoss A.) and belongs to two brothers named Genkata and Bohot Singha, who are Rajbangsis or Koch.

Next to this is the Subah of Cherang, who seems to be one of the most considerable. Cherang, at the head of the pass, is four days' journey from Kochuvari (Cutchubary A.) to which the Subah descends in the cold season. Two chiefs, who both claim a descent from the god Siva, and who assume the title of Narayan, are under his authority. The first is the Raja of Sidili, to whom the country between the Sankosh and the Ayi river belongs. The present possessor is the tenth or eleventh person of the same family, who has held these lands, which they probably received as an appanage, as being descended of Viswa Singha, the Koch price. Lakshmi Narayan, grandfather to the present chief, lived at Nehalgang. Having frequent disputes with the people of Bhotan about tribute, they occasionally made terrible incursions; and in one surprised him and one of his brothers, and put them to death. His son Uday Narayan lived generally at Nilavari, close to the Company's village of Dhontola and seldom paid tribute, which occasioned several incursions, and the ruin of the country; but he always made his escape into the Company's territory; and the Bhoteas never remain long in the plains. His son Surjya Narayan is now only a lad consents to pay the tribute quietly, and ventures to live at Sojinagang on the Kani-bhur river, which falls into the Champamati (Champowatty A.) and is only at a very little distance from the frontier. Both he and his father have had a house in Parbat joyar, to which, in case of alarm, the family has retired. The part of Sidili close to the Company's frontier is in tolerable condition, as the people, unless surprised, can always escape; but nearer

the Subah every part is waste. The tribute is 500 rupees, and some oil, dried fish, and coarse cotton cloth.

The other chief descended of Viswa Singha, and under the government of the Subah of Cherang, is the Vijni Raja, of whom I intend to give a full account as a subject of the Company. Vijni (Bisnee A.), the estate from which he takes his title, is subject to Bhotan; but he is said to be very gently treated, on the supposition that he would be protected by the Company, and a few men dressed like Seapoys, that he entertains in his house, are probably believed to belong to the government of Bengal. It is said, that the dry fish, cloth, and other articles which he sends annually to Bhotan, are considered merely as presents, and that in return he receives others of nearly an equal value. It is evident, when Major Rennell published the maps of Bengal, that he considered Sidili as comprehended in Vijni, or in Bootan Bisnee, as he writes it, which he extends from the Gaurang to the Manas (Banash A.) river. In place of Guma Bholka and Raymana he lays down the country of Mocum Narayan, who from Mr. Turner's embassy we learn was Mukunda Narayan the last Vijni Raja: but then this chief never possessed that part of the country, nor indeed any part subject to Bhotan, that is west from the Ayi river, which by Major Rennell is called Barally.

The hilly country between the mountains and the level, that is under the authority of the Subah of Cherang, is also divided into two districts. The one that is north from Sidili is called Nunmati, and belongs to a chief called Chamuka. The other part, north from Vijni, comprehends Nichima and Hatikura, and belongs to a chief called Mamudam. These hilly districts are cultivated by the hoe, and produce much cotton. They are inhabited chiefly by Kachharis, of whom I intend hereafter to give an account.

I learned nothing of the Subahs that reside on the frontier of Asam.

I have already mentioned the manner in which the trade between Asam and Bhotan is conducted. It is said to be of

considerable importance, and to amount to 200,000 rupees a year.

The exports from Asam, are lac, muga silk, and cloth, Erendi cloth, and dry fish. The imports from Bhotan are woollen cloth, gold dust, salt, musk, horses, Chamor Chaungri or Thibet bull tails, and Chinese silks.

West from Bhotan, according to the native of Nogang, the high mountains are occupied by the Kampo Bhoteas, who are said to resemble in their manners the other tribes of the Bhot nation so widely spread between Kasmira and China, and to have adopted the religion of Buddha. By the Bengalese Brahman they were said to enjoy part of the revenue, or rather plunder of Charidwar; but this the Raja Brajanath denies.

The lower hills adjacent to those of Bhotan are represented in the map of the native of Nogang to be occupied by the tribe of Miri or Michimi; but Raja Brajanath places these farther east, beyond the eastern boundary of Asam, and supplies their place by the Ankas, a very petty people.

Beyond these towards the east, all authorities agree in placing the Dophlas, a more numerous race. According to the native of Nogang they extend farther east than Asam, and beyond it reach to the Brahmaputra; but Raja Brajanath makes the river Kundil the eastern boundary of the Dophlas, and beyond it on the right of the Brahmaputra he places the Miris or Michimis, and, as I have already mentioned, I prefer his authority. The Kundil enters the northern bank of the Brahmaputra opposite to Sodiya, and at the temple of Dikorbasani or the Upper Kamakshiya, which is on the west side, and about ten miles below Tiklipotar, the extremity of Asam. The Miri of Michimi, and Dophlas, are said to retain the fierce and warlike spirit of the ancient Asamese; they indulge their appetites in eating unclean food as much as the impure nations of China and Europe, and adhere to their old customs, altogether rejecting the instruction of the sacred order of the Hindus, and what is called the purity of its law.

## CHAPTER II. OF THE COUNTRIES SOUTH OR ON THE LEFT OF THE BRAHMAPUTRA.

A wide mountainous tract extends north from Cape Negrais to the Brahmaputra. With its south end it separates the old kingdoms of Pegu (Bagu) and Arakan (Rakhain) both now subject to Ava (Awa). Towards the middle and north it separates Ava and its dependencies from Bengal and Asam. At its southern extremity it is narrow, and is inhabited by petty tribes, too poor to have been worth converting by the followers of Gautama, or of Vyasa. Towards the middle and north this elevated region widens, and contains more extensive valleys. The tribes therefore are of greater value and importance. Accordingly the Rajas of Tripura, Monipur, Jaintiya, and Kachhar, all pretty considerable chiefs, have restrained from abandoning themselves to an impure indulgence of their appetites, and have received instruction from the sacred order of the Hindus, who adhere to the doctrines of Vyasa, as explained by Madhva Acharya : while some tribes, such as the Yo, and others now subject to Ava, have been converted to the doctrines of Gautama.

It is now my intention to give a short view of the tribes which occupy the hilly tract, so far as they are connected with Asam.

According to a Brahman of Monipur, with whom I met at Komila in the year 1798, the only chiefs of consequence in this hilly territory are the Rajas of Bong, Monipur, Kachhar, Jaintiya, and Tripura ; all of whom carry the white umbrella as the badge of royalty, in the same manner as is done by the kings of Asam and Ava, which no doubt added to the violence with which the latter invaded the dominions of these petty usurpers of so exalted a distinction.

Concerning the Tripura Raja (Tiperah R.) as having no connection with Asam, I shall here say nothing.

It must be observed, that all the people from Asam with whom I conversed, were totally silent concerning the Bong, whose Raja, according to the Brahman above mentioned, was a kinsman of their king, and received tribute from him, while the Brahmaputra flows through his dominions before it enters Asam. The only chief that is a kinsman of the Asam Raja in the male line, of whom I heard, is the Raja of Nora ; but he is too petty to exact tribute, and he is not situated on the Brahmaputra. The Bong Raja is therefore some chief on that river above Asam ; and the accounts which I received concerning these parts are very confused and contradictory.

On the side of the Brahmaputra, opposite to the Miri or Dophlas immediately beyond the Dikrong river, are said by the native of Nogang to dwell a people called Abor, and farther up another tribe called Tikliya Nagas, both of whom are extremely savage. They are indeed said by the Brahman of Bengal to be cannibals, and to have little intercourse with the people in Asam, although the two territories are adjacent. In Nepal I heard of a nation of cannibals in these eastern regions, who in 1802 were said to be engaged in a war with the Chinese of Thibet, and probably may have been one of those tribes, or at least some kindred race. In place of the Abor, the Raja Brajanath places Khamti, although both the native of Nogang and the Bengalese Brahman place this nation nearly south of Jorhat ; while the Tikliya Nagas, which the Bengalese Brahman placed to the north of the Abor, the Raja brings to the west of Nora in place of Khamti. His authority I considered as the best, and therefore I consider Khamti, which may be another name for Abor and Bong, as occupying the left bank of the Brahmaputra above Sodiya. Khamti may perhaps be the Asamese title of the Raja, and Abor the name of the tribe ; while Bong may be the name given to the same nation or prince by the people of Monipur. The territory of the Khamti Raja, according to the Bengalese Brahman, but he never was there, is rather a plain country, but much overgrown with woods. The inhabitants are reckoned expert workmen in iron and timber, and their manners are nearly



the same with those which prevail in Nora. Until lately the Raja was entirely independent, and a very friendly intercourse subsisted between his subjects and the Asamese. On the death of Gaurinath, king of Asam, the Bura Gohaing invited the Raja of Khamti to an interview, under pretence of treating with him for the succession to the throne of Jorhat ; for it must be observed, that the right of all the descendants of Gadadhar to the succession is doubtful, as his birth was illegitimate. During this interview the unwary Raja was seized, and put in confinement, and the Asamese took possession of the greater part of Khamti. In 1808, however, the nephew of the captive prince was still able to act on the defensive, and harassed the Asamese with a band of faithful adherents. The Bura Gohaing was then said to be preparing a force in order to reduce the country to entire obedience ; but whether or not this force proceeded in the beginning of 1809, or what has been the result, I have not learned.

In the maps drawn by the native of Nogang and Raja Brajanath, these nations are placed east from Sodiya ; as if the Brahmaputra continued, beyond Tikliya Potar, to run from east to west ; but I think this highly improbable ; and I imagine that at the above mentioned place it runs from north to south, and descends there from the mountains to the plains at the place called Brahmakunda ; for a guard called Misamara, situated on the frontier of Asam, opposite to the boundary between the Khamti and Chingpho, universally admitted to be south from the territory that is situated beyond Sodiya on the bank of the Brahmaputra, is not a day's journey, say ten miles, south from that river ; so that Khamti, or whatever territory occupies the left bank, must reach far north from Sodiya.

South from the Abor, or Khamti, as I have said, is a country called Chingpho, which has a Raja independent of Asam, but with whose people there is some commercial intercourse. I imagine that the people of Chingpho are those whom the inhabitants of Ava call Kasi shan ; for the Asamese say, that immediately beyond Chingpho is a great river called

Bara Lusit or Luhit, which they say flows into the country of the Brahmas, as they call the inhabitants of Ava. Now this can only be the great western branch of the Erawati, which joins that river below Ava, and is there called Khaen duaen, and in the maps which I procured at Ava the Kasi shan are placed on the upper part of that river. It is also to be remarked, that the people of Asam bring the Bara or Great Luhit river from the same Brahmakunda that gives rise to the Brahmaputra, that is to say, according to their ideas, from a great pool or lake, into which the Brahmaputra of Nepal, or Sanpo of Thibet, is precipitated in coming south from the northern mountains. It is also to be observed, that, as the western branch of the Erawati, or river of Ava is by the Asamese called Bara Luhit or Lusit, so the Brahmaputra, proceeding from the same place, in their common language is called Lusit or Luhit. In Sanskrit it is called Lohitya, as well as Brahmaputra. The former name seems to be an alteration of Luhit, in order to give it a meaning in the sacred language. The latter is derived from a monstrous fable. From this may be inferred that the Brahmaputra and river of Ava communicate by a branch scarcely inferior in size to either river ; but it is probably incapable of being navigated, on account of its rapidity near the place of separation ; for on that account the Brahmaputra of Asam is not navigable any higher up than Tikli Potar. This curious anastomosis is farther confirmed by an account, which I received at Komila, and which will be afterwards mentioned. Chingpho is probably the same country with that which the priest from Monipur, above mentioned, called Samsouk ; although it must be rather west than north Mokaaur, a town on the Erawati, as he asserted of Samsouk.

West from Chingpho, and bounding on the south with Asam, as is universally admitted, is the country of Nora, which belongs to the descendants of Khunlai, brother of Khuntai, first king of Asam. The language and customs of the people of Nora are the same with those which formerly prevailed among the proper Asamese ; and between the two people there is still a constant friendly intercourse ; and many natives

of Nora are always to be found at the court of Jorhat. Through the Nora country flows a river called Dihing, into which the Luhit or Brahmaputra seems to have forced its way, having separated into two channels at Tikliapotar. The southern branch, although now the principal channel of the river, is usually called the Dihing, because it occupies the ancient channel of that river, while the northern branch is commonly called the Buri or old Luhit, or as Major Wood writes, Boree Lewit : but it is considered as the proper Brahmaputra, just as the small river at Murshedabad is reckoned the proper Bhagirathi or Ganges, while by the natives of Bengal the great stream of that river is always called Pada or Padma.

West from Nora, according to Raja Brajanath, are the Tikliya Nagas and Nagas subject to Monipur, and extending to nearly the parallel in longitude of Koliyabar, where the territory of Monipur bounds with that of Kachhar.

When Major Wood was in Asam 1794, a party of the Monipur people called Magalus (Meckley R.) had come to the assistance of Gaurinath, whom the British forces then restored ; and when at Ava in 1795, we saw many of them there called Kasis, so that we know the Magalus of the Bengalese and the Kasi people of Ava to be the same ; and the maps which I procured in Ava place Kasi west and south from the territory of the Kasi shan, which confirms my opinion of Chingpho being the same with the last mentioned people. The maps procured in Ava notice nothing that can be interpreted to represent Nora, as it probably is a small territory entirely surrounded by Chingpho, Monipur, and Asam.

I have already mentioned that some of my authorities, although in my opinion not equal in weight to Raja Brajanath, place Khamti where he does the Nagas subject to Manipur ; but there can be little doubt that Manipur or its dependencies are bounded on the east by Nora and Chingpho, on the north by Asam, and on the west by Kachhar. The Swarga Devas, or kings of Asam, have had many alliances with the Rajas of Manipur, and frequent intermarriages with that family.

Since the usurped authority of the Bura Gohaing, all intercourse with Manipur has been prohibited, as its Raja favoured Gaurinath. The roads are now choaked, and even commerce has ceased.

Some account of Manipur may be found in the account of his embassy to Ava by Colonel Symes. The country previous to our being in Ava (1795) had for some time been subjected to the Burma kings, but had then recovered its independence.

Manipur is only the name of the capital : the country and people subject to the Raja of Manipur are by themselves called Moitay, as I learned both from those at Ava, and from a priest with whom I met at Komila in the year 1798, and who had accompanied the Raja Jaya Singha, then at Agatala (in the vicinity of Komila) on a visit to the Raja of Tripura. The chief of Manipur was then an old man, and had with him three sons and an equal number of daughters, one of whom had married Radan Manik, Raia of Tripura. According to the Dewan, or minister of this chief, the eldest son of Jayasingha was left at home in charge of the government. The direct communication between Manipur and Bengal is by Khaspur, the capital of Kachhar, to Srihatta (Silhet R.); but the Raja of Kachhar having killed two messengers, and threatened Jayasingha, that chief cut a new road through the forests to the south, and made his way to Srihatta with 700 men, of whom 300 were porters employed in carrying provisions. The chief travelled on horseback, as the road would not admit of elephants. He was very poor, and his train was supported at the expense of the Tripura Raja. He was a rigid Hindu, and eat nothing that ever had animal life. His people eat no animal food except fish. Their country, according to the minister, produces abundance of rice, cotton, iron, wax, and honey, and some ivory ; and the revenues are paid entirely in kind. The country subject to Manipur, and occupied by Moitays, is everywhere surrounded by hills inhabited by the people whom the Bengalese called Kungkis, the Cuci of Sir

William Jones. I suppose that the Nagas of Assam are the same people. Many of the Kungkis are independent, while others are tributary to Tripura, Manipur, Kachhar, and other neighbouring chiefs.

The Manipur priest above mentioned said, that the Brahmas or Burmas invaded his native country about the year 1768, and for eight years remained there, committing every kind of devastation. The country previously had contained a very great number of horses and other cattle, not above one in a hundred of which was left behind. He thinks that the Burmas carried away or destroyed 300,000 persons of different ages and sexes; and indeed it was alleged, when I was at Ava, that 100,000 captives remained near that city.

The country of the Moitay, according to the priest, produces elephants, horses, buffaloes, and oxen. The Raja has a few tame elephants. Twelve cows may be bought for a rupee, and as much rice as a man can eat in a year may be procured for the same money. Silver must therefore be very scarce. Wax, honey, and silk are to be had at Manipur, the two first in abundance. A little wheat and pulse, and much rice are grown in the country, and the sugar-cane reaches the thickness of a man's leg. In their diet the people use much green vegetables (Sak.). They have mines or quarries of iron, lime and salt.

The new road, according to the priest, is passable for elephants, horses, and oxen; but loaded cattle would take a month to pass through it, and necessity compelled the Raja to use dispatch, and to come in fifteen days. From the middle of December to the middle of February is the most favourable season. The stages are as follows.

One day from Srihatta or Silhet to Bangga (Bangah R.) in the Company's territory.

One day from Banga to Jayanagar in Kachhar.

One day from Jayanagar to Lakhyipur or Lakshmipur in Kachhar.

Three days from Lakhyipur to Dharmaka, a landing place on the Surma river, which is so far navigable in boats from Silhet.

Two days from Dharmaka to Mon-ta, a Kungki village.

One day from Mon-ta to Lum-pai, another Kungki village.

One day from Lum-pai to Lay-rong-poung, a Kungki village.

One day from Lay-rong-poung to Nun-shai, a Kungki village.

One day from Nung-shai to Ka-ruay, a Kungki village.

The roads between these Kungki villages are very hilly.

One day from Ka-ruay to Vishnipur, a village inhabited by Moitays.

One day from Vishnipur to Poba, a village of Moitays.

One day from Poba to Mong-cham, a village of Moitays.

One day from Mong-cham to Manipur.

These Kungki or Langga villages belong to an independent chief, who lives at a place called Pai-too, three days journey south from the road. Instigated by the Kachhar Raja he gave great trouble to the chiefs of Manipur and Tripura. In his territory are no navigable rivers; but it is said, that he can bring 8000 men into the field.

At Ava I met with several Brahmans from Manipur. These had exactly Hindu countenances, and spoke Bengalese; but the common Moitays have little resemblance to the Brahmans; and, although, darker, have features a good deal resembling the Burmas or Chinese. The language of the Moitay, of which a vocabulary has been deposited in the Company's library, has a little or no resemblance, to the Bengalese, although the Brahmans state, that at Manipur many Musulmans and Hindus from Bengal have been very long settled,

and still retain the dialect of their original country. The Brahmans have converted the Moitay to the worship of Vishnu, under the forms of Rama and Krishna. None of them, that I saw, understood Sanskrit ; but they had books in both the Bengalese and Moitay dialects. They are totally ignorant of the name Asam, and called that country Tayko, as did also the priest whom I saw at Komilla.

To the west of the Kasi, or Moitay, or the territories of the Manipur Raja, the people of Ava place the Akapat, one of whom that I saw in Ava said, that some time before the Burma invasion of Manipur, the Raja of that town had destroyed the kingdom of the Akapat, and had brought a great part of its inhabitants to Manipur. When this place was plundered many of the Akapat were carried to Ava. Their language was Bengalese.

West from Manipur and its dependencies, on the frontier of Asam, is the territory of the Kachhar (Cachar R.) Raja, which borders with Asam from nearly opposite to Koliyabar to the river Kopili, which enters the Kolong about the middle of its course. The length of this frontier is therefore about thirty miles. At the Kopili, Kachhar reaches with a corner to the Kolong ; but in general it does not descend into the plain on the bank of that river. It extends a little south of the Surma, which passes Silhet or Srihatta in Bengal, and therefore to about 24°30' of north latitude, while its northern extremity is in about 26°20' north giving 110 geographical miles for its length. What its width at its south end is I cannot say ; but it is probably greater than that of its northern extremity ; and the whole territory is much more extensive than Major Rennell seems to have thought. Among the Hindus this country is called Hairamba, and numerous monstrous stories are told concerning its inhabitants. It is universally admitted, that its prince is descended of Babraban, the son of Arjuna, one of the four brothers of Yudhishthira, who claimed the sovereignty of India at the commencement of the iron age. Krishna Chandra, however, the late Raja, was the first of the family who adopted the purity of the Brahmans' law and

retired to Gya after having resigned the kingdom to his brother. This chief has also chosen Brahmans for his spiritual guides, and has deserted the ancient priests of the Kachhar tribe, who were called Patris, and were impure infidels. The ancestors of this chief, as I have formerly mentioned, are said to have been sovereigns of Asam ; and there is still frequent intercourse and some commerce between the two people. The territory remaining to this very ancient family is quite mountainous. The language of Kachhar is entirely different from that of Manipur, or of the Moitay. A vocabulary of it has been deposited in the Company's library.

West from the territory of the Kachhari Raja is that of the Jaintiyas (Gentiah R.). Some of my informants insist that this is no where adjacent to the frontier of Asam ; while others assert that the Kajoli mukha Gohaing has been appointed to watch over the frontier between the two countries, Jaintiya reaching to the Kolong river were joined by the Kopili, which separates it from Kachhar. This is probably true ; as when Mr. Wood made his survey, the people would appear to have pointed out many hills in that quarter, and at no great distance from the Brahmaputra, as belonging to the Jaintiyas. The difference of opinion among my informants may have arisen from there being interposed some petty chiefs of the Garo nation, who still retain their ancient customs, but who are tributary to the Jaintiya Raja, who lives near Srihatta or Silhet. One set of my informants, therefore, consider Kachhar as bounded on the west by Garos, while another set consider these as forming part of the principality of Jaintiya. Formerly there was a friendly intercourse between the Rajas of Asam and Jaintiya ; but since the jealous government of the Bura Gohaing this has been relinquished, and commerce is prohibited.

The Raja of Jaintiya is by birth a Garo ; but he has received instruction from the Brahmans, and has been civilized according to the manner and degree that are usual among the followers of that order of priests. The extent of Jaintiya from east to west, is probably nearly the same with that of Kachhar ;



but its length from north to south is considerably less. In their succession the Jaintiya Rajas retain the custom of the Garos, and they coin a base money in their own name, with the legend in Hindu characters.

West from Jaintiya there extends a mountainous region about 100 miles in length from east to west, and thirty miles in width from north to south. It is occupied by a people whom the Bengalese call Garo, a name which Major Rennell and Mr. Eliot write Garrow. This last mentioned gentleman, in the third volume of the Asiatic Researches, has given an account of what he observed concerning the portion of this people that lives adjacent to the southern side of the mountains. The account which I am about to give was taken from the inhabitants of the north, which may explain my having in some points differed from the account given by Mr. Eliot. The parts, however, where the two accounts contradict each other, appear to me of little or no consequence ; but Mr. Eliot had opportunities of describing circumstances, such as their marriage ceremonies and domestic economy, which did not come within the reach of my observation ; and, on other points, the accounts which I received seem to be more full than what was communicated to Mr. Eliot.

What I have stated as the dimensions of the Garo country, that is 100 miles from east to west, and 30 miles from north to south, is the present territory, which this nation retains as an independent people, and has been secured to them by the difficulty with which it could be penetrated. It seems a mass of hills from 1000 to 3000 feet of perpendicular height, and very steep ; and although watered by numerous small streams contains scarcely any level land, the hills being every where immediately contiguous to each other. Towards the centre, I am credibly informed, that there are immense masses of naked rock, and even large spaces totally destitute of vegetation ; but so far as I saw, and as I am told, is the case in by far the greater part of the territory, the hills, however steep, consist of a deep rich soil, and are fit for being cultivated by the hoe. The climate being very moist, such a soil produces a

most luxuriant vegetation ; and where ever undisturbed by cultivation, the mountains are covered by noble forests, that contain a great variety of trees and plants, highly ornamental, curious, and valuable.

Besides this natural fortress, and the mountains of the civilized Jaintiyas, the Garos seem formerly to have occupied much of the adjacent low country, and still retain some part as subjects to other powers.

In my account of Asam I have mentioned that most of the tributary Rajas on the south side of the Brahmaputra are of Garo origin, and the art of war has hitherto made so little progress among the Asamese, that they have not been able to strip these chiefs of their dominions. On the contrary, they have contented themselves with a moderate tribute, and conciliate the friendship of the independent mountaineers by a free commercial intercourse. The same was probably the case towards the west and south during the government of the Koch and Moguls, whose cavalry were totally incapable of making any encroachment on the hills and woods of the Garos. No sooner, however, could the Bengalese Zemindars call to their assistance the terror of the British arms, than they seem to have made violent encroachments on the poor Garos, whose only arms are bows, swords, and spears, all of a very imperfect kind. Not that any regulars, so far as I know, were engaged against these people ; but the terror of their name, employed by the people, (Zemindars), considered as officers of the Company, was sufficient. The most exorbitant, exactions have been made on every Garo, who comes to the Company's territory to exchange his commodities ; and the chiefs, who possessed lands that were accessible, have been either driven entirely from them, as from the large space between the mountains on one side, and Kalumalupara and Mechpara on the other ; or they have been rendered not only tributary, but mere cyphers, as in Hawaraghat. It is even alleged, that by far the best villages and largest portion of that district are recent and violent usurpations from a Garo chief.

As the Garos are an independent people, an application on their part to the Company's courts of justice, would be highly imprudent, and of this they seem abundantly aware. Owing to their remote situation, and an insuperable objection which they have against venturing into a boat, they have no means of laying their case before government, to which alone they could with propriety complain. On several occasions of gross violence they have therefore had recourse to arms, and have frequently alarmed the kites by whom they have been injured. The country from which they were driven by the Bengalese of Kalumalupara and Mechpara continues waste; and a late imprudent attempt of the Zemindar of the former place to increase the exactions taken at the markets has produced an invasion and several assassinations, the terror of which has depopulated the best part of his lands. The complaints against the Vijni Raja are so strong, that had it not been for the fear occasioned by the detachment of Seapoys at Yogighopa, similar consequences would probably have ensued.

The whole of the conduct of the Zemindars towards the Garos seems, therefore, to require a serious investigation, and this will be attended with considerable difficulty. There would be an absolute necessity that the investigation should be conducted on the spot by a person fully authorized to call on the Zemindars and their tenants for every sort of evidence, and to punish contumacy and prevarication; and there would be an absolute necessity for treating with the Garos, at least with those of the mountains, as with an independent people. A considerable time for negotiation would also be required, as no means will be left untried by the Zemindars and Bengalese traders in order to terrify the Garos, so as to keep them from an interview, or to break off any negotiation that may be likely to have effect.

With regard to the Garo chiefs who have possessions in the plains, and have been rendered tributary to the Zemindars, there is more difficulty. Why, when the settlement was made, they were not considered as Talukdars or Muzkuris, and, like

other persons of that description, were not exempted from the authority of the Zemindars, and considered as tenants *in capite*, I know not. The remoteness of their situation, probably, concealed them from the knowledge of those who made the settlement; but their case would require a full investigation.

The Garos from whom I received the following account of their customs, were the chief of Raumari, the chief of Ramjongga or Amjongga and his predecessor, the chief of Damra the chief Digman, and a priest from the hills near Jira, all of the tribe which borders on Hawaraghat: and what they describe can be only considered as strictly applicable to that division of the nation. The chief of Raumari was a boy, but had with him some men of sense, when he favoured me with a visit. The chief of Ramjongga was born in the mountains, but has accepted of the management of a territory which seems originally to have belonged to his family, but which is now rendered subject to the Raja of Vijnai, who appoints to its nominal management some Garo of the original family of proprietors: but, in imitation of the kings of Asam, changes the person whenever he pleases. This chief was a well-behaved intelligent young man, who adhered to the customs of his fathers, although he spoke the Bengalese language with fluency. His predecessor had been persuaded by the Raja to adopt the worship of Vishnu, and had made considerable progress in the art of writing Bengalese. He was a very shrewd intelligent man; nor did I learn the reason of his being dismissed. It is probable, however, that along with the science of the Bengalese he had acquired some degree of crooked policy. The chief of Damra was another well-behaved young man, who is exactly on the same footing with the chief of Ramjongga, was born in the mountains, and retains the customs of his ancestors. The chief called Digman alleged, that he had been deprived not only of his estate in the low lands, which amounted to almost the half of Hawaraghat, but had been robbed of a great part of his private property, consisting of cattle and slaves. He had therefore retired entirely to the mountains, where however he was still one of the most power-

ful chiefs. He seemed to be a simple, inoffensive man, but I believe has been accused of robbery by the Vijni Raja.

The Garos are a short, stout-limbed, active people, with strongly marked Chinese countenances, as is the case with all the aboriginal tribes of the mountains, from the Brahmaputra to Cape Negrais, that I have seen. In general the features of the Garos are harsh, but the chiefs are rather handsome, and their manners, in both urbanity and veracity, are superior to those of the Zemindars of Bengal. The Garo chiefs in their address are equally exempt from insolence and adulation; two extremes into which the Zemindars are apt to indulge, according as they are confident or afraid; while the veracity of the whole Garo nation is undoubted; and it is avowed by the Bengalese that a Garo was never known to forfeit his word. It is admitted by both people that a Garo woman can carry on the hills as great a load as a man of Bengal can carry on the plain; and that a Garo man can carry one third more; and this is attributed to their using more animal food and spirituous liquor.

My informants say that Garo is a Bengalese word, nor do they seem to have any general word to express their nation, each of the tribes into which it is divided having a name peculiar to itself. An individual of the tribe adjoining to Hawaraghat is called Achhik; but the collective name or plural number is Achhikrong. The high hills of Mechpara are occupied by the Abeng, with whom I could procure no interview, the Zemindar having probably alarmed them. The Abeng may perhaps be considered as subjects of the Company, as their hills are entirely surrounded by the lands of the Mechpara Chaudhuri, and are not included in the territory, which I have specified as belonging to the Garo nation; but I believe they have always declined subjecting themselves to the decisions of the courts in Bengal. The tribe bordering on Mechpara and Kalumalupara, that occupies the high mountains and retains an entire independence, is the Kochunasindiya. This people also declined an interview, probably from similar

reasons. The tribe bordering on Susangga is called Kochu, or Counc, as Mr. Eliot writes. From the account of that gentleman, these seem to occupy only the low lands, and to be tributary; and their territory is not included in what I have considered as belonging to the nation as independent. The tribe of the Garo nation that borders on Asam is called Nuniya. Part of the Nuniyas have been converted to the worship of Vishnu, and occupy a large proportion of the lower part of Asam: a part however inhabits the mountains, is independent, and this only is included in the space which I have considered as belonging to the national property. The Nuniyas are also called Dugol.

The language of the Nuniyas is said to be different from that of other Garos; and although all Garos can intermarry, it is generally admitted that the Nuniyas are of the highest rank. Their priests can officiate for all Garos; but the priest of any of the other cannot officiate for a Nuniya. The Nuniyas and Kochunasindiya have made some farther progress in society than the others. Some among them are merchants, and trade in slaves, salt, and silver; while others are artists, and work in iron, brass, and the precious metals. The Achhiks and Abeng are all cultivators, who practise some rude arts, and who have no other commerce than the exchanging the produce of their farms for the articles which they want for consumption. So far as I could learn, the languages of the four western tribes are nearly the same, and a specimen has been lodged in the Company's library. The Achhiks seems to occupy by far the greatest part of the territory, in which the nation is entirely independent.

In Hawaraghat all the Garos, except the dependent chiefs, have entirely retired to the mountains, and the lands of these chiefs are cultivated by Rabhas or Bengalese; but in Mechpara, I saw some houses belonging to Garos, who paid a regular rent, and who used the plough, and cultivated with fully as much care as any of the neighbouring Bengalese.

The Achhiks, or Garos, of the mountains of Hawaraghat, are subdivided into clans called Chatsibak. In each of these Chatsibaks there would appear to be three chiefs, whose rank is hereditary ; but all are not equal in dignity, and their various degrees of precedency have been established by long custom. Among the Bengalese of Hawaraghat these chiefs are called Laskur, but the national appellation for a chief is Nokma, or, collectively, Nokmarong. Each clan consists of one or more villages, called Sung, which are usually at a distance of two or three coses from each other, and contain from forty to three hundred families (Gonsung). These villages seem to be fixed, and the houses are surrounded by gardens, while the territory belonging to it is cleared, and cultivated by the hoe after long fallows, in which the trees are allowed to spring to the size of copice wood.

The chiefs and the head men of families assemble in a council called Jingma changga, and endeavour to reconcile all those of the clan who have disputes ; for it would not appear that they have a right to inflict any punishment unless a man should be detected in uttering a falsehood before them, in which case he would be put to instant death, more from popular indignation than from a regular progress of justice. Dishonesty or stealing seem rarely to be practised, and almost the only source of dispute seems to be murder, which would appear to be an ordinary crime. But the relations of the person killed, are, by custom, held bound to demand blood for blood, and ought to put to death either the murderer or one of his kindred, or at least one of his slaves. The other family then is bound to pursue a similar mode of retaliation, and the feud would thus continue endless, unless the council interfered, and brought about a mutual reconciliation, which it is usually able to effectuate, by inducing the parties to accept a price for the blood that has been spilt. Although every head of a family has an equal right to sit in their assemblies, the influence of the chiefs, or of one or two wise men usually decides every thing.

When a man of one clan murders a person belonging to a different community, the matter is arranged with more difficulty, and often produces a war, unless the chiefs mutually endeavour to reconcile matters, in which case their influence generally prevails; but they have no authority to declare peace or war, nor even in the field do they pretend to command any free man. If any man complains of an injury, such as one of his family having been murdered by a foreigner, the whole clan is ready to avenge his cause, or to fight until their companion is satisfied. No compulsion can be used; but the man who refused to take the field would be entirely disgraced. In the field every free man (Nokoba) fights as he pleases; but as the slaves (Nokol) form about two fifths of the whole population, as they almost entirely belong to the chiefs, and as they are all led to war, and implicitly obey the orders of their masters, the influence of these last predominates in every resolution; as their men, acting in subordination, form the chief strength of the clan. The slaves are not only distinguished for their obedience, but for their courage, as freedom is a reward often bestowed on such as exhibit valour. Unless, therefore, the injury has been committed by a chief on some person of a chief's family, the dispute is usually terminated after a little skirmishing, and the chiefs induce the injured person to accept a price for the blood of his kinsman.

The important matters of succession, and union of the sexes, have been arranged in a manner that does not seem convenient.

A Garo man or woman, that has connexion with a person of a different nation, is not liable to excommunication; and any person who chooses to live among them and follow their manners, may obtain the rights of a free man. A young unmarried woman, who proved with child, would suffer no disgrace; but instances are very rare, as the women are usually married while children. A man cannot turn away his wife on account of adultery, unless he chooses to give up his whole property and children, and to this he seldom consents, except



when he knows that some other woman, who is richer than his wife, will take him for her husband. A woman, whenever she pleases, may turn away her husband, and may, in general, marry any other person, conveying to him the whole property that her former husband possessed, and taking with her all her children ; but the rank of the children arises from that of their father. A man is thus placed in a very difficult situation. If his wife chooses a paramour the husband is terrified lest this invader should be able to persuade the woman to transfer the property of the family. It is true, that, as a remedy, he may kill the lover, which he may do without blame ; but he is afraid not only of the revenge of the man's kindred, but of that of his wife, who, if permitted to enjoy her lover, might be unwilling to disturb the family in which she had lived, but who would be very apt to avenge her lover's death by choosing a new husband. In fact, however, I understand that divorces are very rare, and many wives when they are infirm, or have no children, allow their husbands to marry a second wife, or to keep a concubine. When a chief dies, his heir is any one of his sister's sons, that his widow, or if he has left no widow, that his surviving concubine chooses. The fortunate youth, if married, immediately separates from his wife, who takes all his private fortune and children; while he marries the old woman, and receives the dignity, fortune, and insignia of honor becoming his high rank. These insignia consist of a red turban, two bracelets of bell metal for each arm, and a string of beads for his neck, and are bestowed in a great ceremony, that cannot cost less than a hundred rupees. These acquisitions, however, do not always compensate for the disparity of age in his bride ; and a boy who had been lately elevated to the dignity, after taking a draught of wine that opened his heart, complained with great simplicity, that he had married an old toothless creature, while his cousin, although poor, had a pretty young wife, with whom he could play the whole day long. When the old lady dies he will of course take a young wife, who will probably survive him, and select a new chief from among his sister's sons. The wife of a chief may divorce him, but she must choose her next

husband from the same noble family, as its members alone are capable of being raised to the dignity.

A man cannot marry his father's brother's daughter ; but he may marry the daughter of his mother's brother. A chief may marry the daughter of any free man (Nokoba) ; but intermarriages between free men and slaves are not tolerated nor can a man even keep a slave girl as a concubine.

A great part of the slaves are procured from the Nuniyas, who bring them from Asam. They are chiefly Garos, who had been converted, and who have lost cast by impure feeding, and have been sold as a punishment for their transgression. They of course return to the customs of their ancestors, and often obtain freedom by their valorous conduct in war. Many poor parents, however, are reduced by want to sell their children ; a conduct that is considered as reprehensible, but for which there is no punishment. Several chiefs can bring 60 able bodied slaves into the field, which in such small clans gives them a vast authority.

The Garos rear, for eating, kine, goats, swine, dogs, cats, fowls, and ducks ; and they purchase from the inhabitants of the low country all these animals, together with tortoises, and fish both fresh and dried. In the hills they also procure many deer, wild hogs, frogs, and snakes, all of which they eat. In fact they have no aversion to any food, except milk and its preparations, all of which they abominate ; and they have no objection to eat in any company, nor to eat what has been dressed by people of another nation. Their vegetable diet consists chiefly of rice and millet (*Panicum Italicum*) with many arums, caladiums, and dioscoreas. For seasoning they have capsicum, onions, and garlick ; but they do not use turmeric. In their dishes they employ both salt and ashes, and sometimes oil ; but they cultivate no plant that produces this. From both the rice and millet they prepare a fermented liquor, which is not distilled, and is used both by men and women to great excess. Poor people usually get drunk once a month,

the chiefs once every two or three days. On such occasions they commonly squabble and fight. They liked the taste of brandy, but preferred wine, as not being so strong.

Although the Garos have long raised great quantities of cotton, they formerly neither spun nor wove. They now have begun to practise these arts, and weave the small slips of cloth, which both men and women wrap round their waists, and their turbans. This constitutes their ordinary dress. For cold weather they make a kind of rug from the bark of the *celtis orientalis*. This serves as a blanket, and by day is thrown round the shoulders. The chiefs, or others in easy circumstances, when in full dress, throw round their shoulders a piece of cloth, silk, cotton, or gold. Their favourite ornament consists of rings of bell-metal, which are passed through the lobes of the ears, and are so heavy as to distend these until they reach the shoulders.

In science they have not even proceeded so far as to write their own language : a few have learned to write the Bengalese.

They believe in the transmigration of the soul, as a state of reward and punishment. Those who are morally wicked are punished by being born as low animals. Those who have not been wicked, and who have made many offerings to the gods, are born in high and wealthy families. Saljung is the supreme god, who lives in heaven (Rang), and has a wife named Manim. No offerings are made to this goddess ; but to her husband are offered male goats, swine, and fowls. This seems to be the deity whom Mr. Eliot called Mahadeva, which merely signifies the great god ; but there is no affinity between Saljung and Siva, who by the Brahmans is usually called Mahadeva. Saljung in fact is the firmament or visible heavens. The heavenly bodies, sun, moon and stars, and spirits who preside over hills, woods, and rivers, are considered as the agents employed by Saljung to manage the affairs of the world. White cocks are offered to the heavenly bodies, and fermented liquor, rice, and flowers,

are offered to the spirits of the hills, rivers and forests. The blood of the animal is first offered, and then, after the flesh has been dressed, a portion is added to the offering, and the votary eats the remainder. There are no temples nor images. Before each house a dry bamboo, with its branches adhering, is fixed in the ground. To this the Garos tie tufts of cotton, threads, and flowers, and before it they make their offerings.

They have an order of priests, who by the Bengalese are called Rojas, from the resemblance between them and the Rojas or Ojas of Bengal. In their own language, these priests are called Kamal. They marry, cultivate the ground, and go to war like their neighbours, and the office is not hereditary; any man who has committed to memory the requisite forms of prayer, may assume that office. These forms of prayer, are publicly repeated at marriages, funerals, and in cases of sickness, or when the clan is about to engage in war. The Kamals also pretend to explain the fates by an examination of the entrails of sacrifices. The liver, in particular, is an object of their attention. The presence of the priest is not necessary on the occasion of common offerings, that are made to the gods.

The funerals of the Achhiks are inconvenient and expensive. When a person dies, the relations are summoned to attend, and ten or twelve days are allowed for their convenience. As they assemble, they are feasted, until the number is complete. In the meantime the body falls into a dreadful state of corruption; but no attention is paid to that circumstance. The head of a stake is then formed into an image, supposed to resemble the deceased, and the point of the stake is driven into the ground. The body is then burnt, the bones are collected into an earthen pot, and the relations retire. After some months, when the family has recovered from the former expense, and has laid in a stock of food and liquor for a new entertainment, the relations are again assembled, and feasted for three days. The bones are then thrown into a river.

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# Government of Assam



## Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Assam.

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